



October 25, 2024

Cuyahoga County Council
Juvenile Court Advisory Subcommittee to Safety Committee
2079 East 9th Street, 8th Floor
Cleveland, OH 44115

Sent electronically to Janine Carter, County Council Clerk at jdcarter@cuyahogacounty.us

Re: Meeting Follow Up & Recommendations

Dear Chair Adrine, Vice Chair Yarham, and members of the Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court Advisory Subcommittee,

Thank you for embarking on this critically important work to enhance efficiency, improve outcomes, and provide fiscal responsibility within Cuyahoga County's Juvenile Justice system. The Greater CLE Youth Justice Collective is a coalition made up of the ACLU of OH, the Children's Law Center, and the Schubert Center for Child Studies at Case Western Reserve University. The Greater CLE Youth Justice Collective was formed to combat the "adulthoodification" of our children in the criminal legal system and foster partnerships among key stakeholders to ensure better opportunities and outcomes for our justice-involved children and youth. As among those calling for the creation of this committee, we have provided some background resources and stand ready to help you meet your objectives.

Per your committee's request for clear, actionable, and specific recommendations for improvements, we urge this committee to take the following steps in the short term to ensure the ultimate policy changes that are adopted are as meaningful as possible.

Recommendations

1. Review opportunities to meaningfully implement the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) framework.

JDAI is a network of juvenile justice practitioners and stakeholders across the country working to build a more effective and equitable youth justice system. JDAI uses a data-driven, problem-solving approach around [eight core strategies](#) to help meet the needs of young people. An aspect of these strategies are the commitments to implementing

community-based alternatives to detention that reduce racial disparities in the juvenile justice system. As Ms. Gibbons' presented on August 19th, 76% of youth referred to the court, 83% of out of home placements, 93% of commitments to state custody, and 97% of mandatory bindovers are youth of color. JDAI is meant to reduce these disparities through a commitment to equity and an evaluation of the process at each stage to guarantee no youth are at a disadvantage. Through this subcommittee our county has an opportunity to be a statewide leader in JDAI work.

We recommend:

A. Evaluating Racial & Ethnic Disparities subcommittee.

- What strategies are they using to address the largest points of disproportionate impact (charging, out-of-home placements, secure detention, DYS commitments, bindover).
- What initiatives does AECF suggest Cuyahoga target to reduce RED?

B. Examining current alternatives to detention.

- What alternatives to detention are currently in place and how effective are they at serving the needs of young people.
- Where can expansions in alternatives be made with JDAI to continue to divert young people away from detention, which we know can exacerbate existing issues for young people.

2. Audit Cuyahoga County's use of state, local and other funding as related to outcomes, including RECLAIM to identify gaps and opportunities to keep kids out of local detention and deep end systems.

Cuyahoga County receives three kinds of RECLAIM state funding in addition to a single allocation of court funding through the Youth Services grant: 1) Formula court allocations; 2) Targeted and Competitive Reclaim funding which focuses on prevention and diversion; and, 3) BHJJ funding for behavioral health issues. RECLAIM formula funding works by providing each court a number of "credits" based on the court's average number of youth adjudicated for felony offenses. Those credits are reduced by one credit for each chargeable DYS bed day used during the previous year and 2/3 credit for each chargeable community corrections facility bed day used during the previous year. Each court's percentage of the remaining credits statewide translates into that court's percentage of the total RECLAIM funds allocated to the courts. The other RECLAIM programs are grant-based and must be applied for. In addition to RECLAIM, the Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court and Detention Center also receive funding from a variety of other governmental and foundation partners for specific projects and programs.

We recommend:

- A. Reviewing the total funds Cuyahoga County has received from all funding sources, including RECLAIM, over a period of at least 3 years.

- Specifically, how has Cuyahoga County utilized these funds over the same period of years, including how many children served with appropriate aggregate demographic data and any outcome data?
- B. Ascertaining what funds, if any, Cuyahoga County currently provides to supplement state funding for youth in or at-risk of entering the juvenile justice system.
3. **Conduct a review of the [Governor's Juvenile Justice Working Group Report \(JJWG\)](#) and Recommendations to determine impact and opportunities of proposals on Cuyahoga County youth.**

Cuyahoga County accounts for the highest number of children and youth placed in the Ohio Department of Youth Services state correctional facilities, as well as the highest number of youth boundover to the adult court and confined adult prisons. This also results in a high percentage of young people returning to our county upon release and requiring critical supports to help get on a productive path and avoid future court involvement. The Report includes a number of recommendations that can help to address concerns of our youth and may offer opportunities for future state and local investments.

We recommend this committee identify and consider priorities from these JJWG recommendations for Cuyahoga county to pursue.

Please let us know if you have any questions on our above recommendations. Thank you for your consideration and for your valuable leadership in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

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