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State of New Hampshire

Office of the Child Advocate

 COLUMBIA | JUSTICE LAB
Shaping Justice for the Future

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**New Hampshire's New Office of the Child Advocate Taps
The Collective Experience & Knowledge of the Columbia University Justice Lab's
Youth Correctional Leaders for Justice (YCLJ)
To Help Fulfill Its Commitment to Improve Outcomes for Children & Families**

**The recently retired president of the Annie E. Casey Foundation &
the leader of the transformation of juvenile justice in Massachusetts
to meet with State Child Advocate's Working Group on Juvenile Justice Friday**

Concord, NH - Youth Correctional Leaders for Justice (YCLJ) members Patrick McCarthy and Jane Tewksbury are scheduled to appear before New Hampshire's Child Advocate's Working Group on Juvenile Justice, in the House of Representatives Finance Committee Room, on Friday, June 21st, at 11 a.m.

McCarthy recently retired as president of the Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF). AECF is one of the most influential organizations in the nation on issues of child welfare and juvenile justice. Jane Tewksbury led the transformation of juvenile justice in Massachusetts as Commissioner of the state's Department of Youth Services.

They are two of the more than 50 past and present juvenile justice officials who spearheaded youth justice transformations in 18 states and have now come together to form YCLJ. YCLJ focuses on efforts to close the nation's remaining youth prisons, where nearly 46,000 children remain incarcerated.

Critical to the success of this national campaign is providing support to state and local governments' development of community-based, family-focused, evidence-based alternatives to youth prisons.

YCLJ is staffed by the Justice Lab at Columbia University. Over the last year, the Justice Lab has connected with a diverse group of states and localities interested in closing down their youth prisons and building effective community-based services, including Harris County, TX; Maine; Philadelphia, PA; Milwaukee, WI.

YCLJ was invited to New Hampshire by the Office of the Child Advocate, an independent oversight agency created in 2018 to transform the Division for Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), the state's child protection and juvenile justice agency.

Moira O’Neill, PhD, RN, the first director of the Office of the Child Advocate, explained that the Child Advocate’s Working Group on Juvenile Justice was convened at the recommendation of the Committee to Study Alternatives to the Continued Use of the Sununu Youth Services Center Facility, (HB 1743, Chapter 355:7, Laws of 2018). “The Committee asked us to look at what other states are doing to best meet the needs of children and communities,” O’Neill stated. “The good news is, the experienced leaders of YCLJ recognize New Hampshire’s strengths and readiness to transform the system to best help children and keep communities safe.”

The Child Advocate’s Working Group on Juvenile Justice reports to the state Oversight Commission on Children’s Services. The Commission includes state legislators, a district court judge, gubernatorial appointees, community providers, and law enforcement.

Justice Lab Youth Justice Project Director Vidhya Ananthakrishnan said: “New Hampshire is far ahead of many states. It has restricted the placement of children in the Sununu Youth Services Center, New Hampshire’s youth prison, and has a history of supporting community placements. YCLJ looks forward to supporting New Hampshire in rebuilding the foundation that the Great Recession broke -- and creating an even stronger network of services for youth development.”

Office of the Child Advocate Pursuant to NH RSA 170-G:18, the Office of the Child Advocate provides independent oversight of the Department for Children, Youth and Families to assure that the best interests of children are being protected.

The Columbia University Justice Lab (@CUJusticeLab) combines original research, policy development, and community engagement to advance criminal justice reform. The Lab envisions a future where justice depends on peaceful and healthy communities that help all their members flourish in a climate of fairness and respect. To achieve this goal, the Justice Lab works for community-centered justice where incarceration is no longer used as a solution to problems that are rooted in poverty and racial inequality.

Columbia University is one of the world's most important centers of research and at the same time a distinctive and distinguished learning environment for undergraduates and graduate students in many scholarly and professional fields. It expects all areas of the University to advance knowledge and learning at the highest level and to convey the products of its efforts to the world.

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