



**Citizens
for
Juvenile
Justice**

School to Prison Pipeline

Juvenile Justice Coalition Legislative Priorities

September 23, 2025

The Cradle to Prison Pipeline



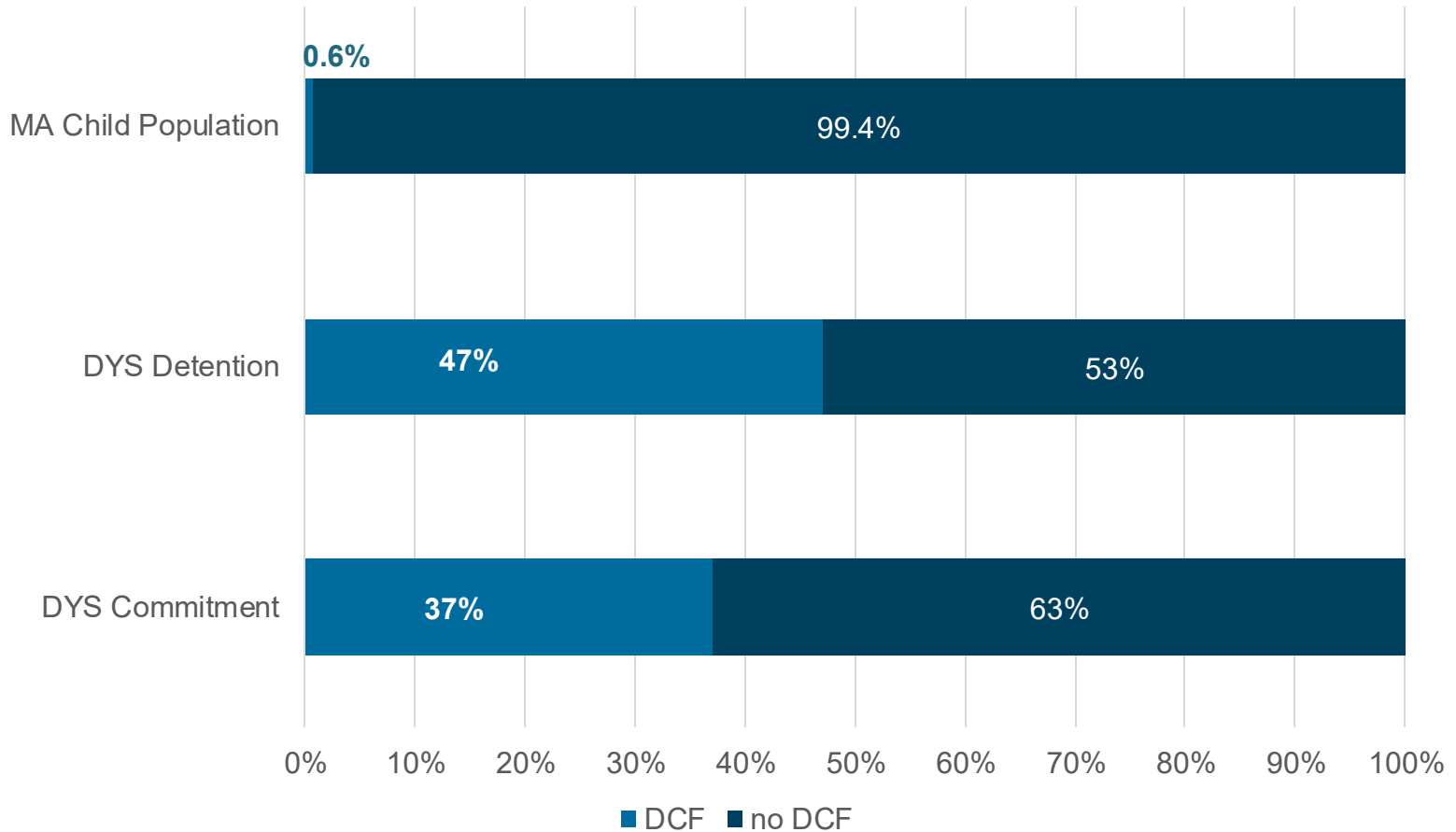
Child Welfare/Trauma

School Exclusion and Arrest

Juvenile Justice Involvement



Dually Involved Youth

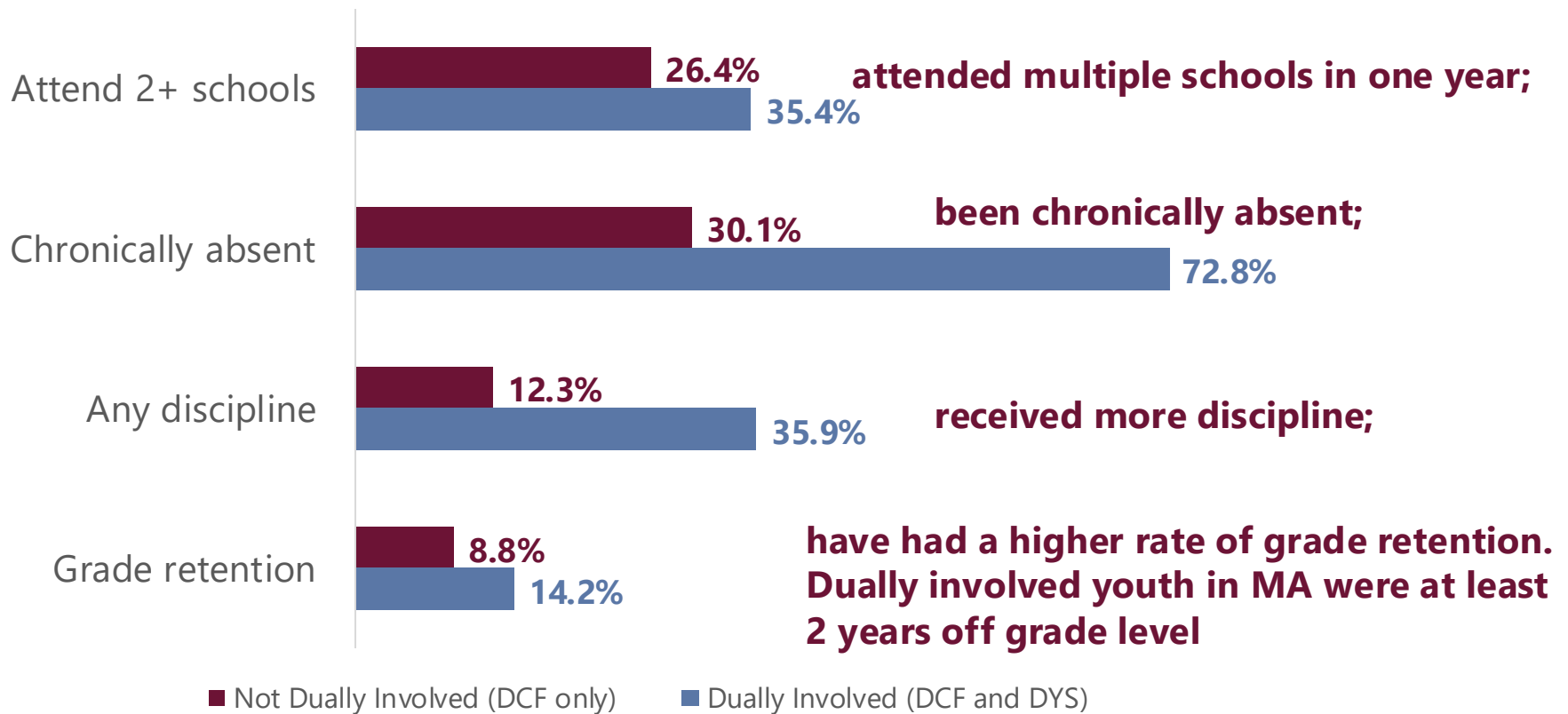


Dually Involved Youth

- Girls in DYS are twice as likely as boys to be DCF-involved
- Younger than non-DCF involved youth
- Held on lower severity offenses (60%)
- More likely to be detained for offenses against persons (rather than weapons offenses)
- More likely to be held on cash bail, and for lower amounts

Educational Experiences of Dually-Involved Youth (DCF & DYS)

Dually involved youth are more likely to have:



Key Issues



CHILD REQUIRING ASSISTANCE

Supporting children in the community not in the courts



STUDENT EXCLUSION

Keep students facing legal cases in school



RAISE THE AGE

Raising age of prosecution as adults from age 18 to age 21

An Act regarding families and children in need of assistance (H265/S141)



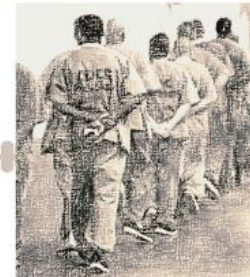
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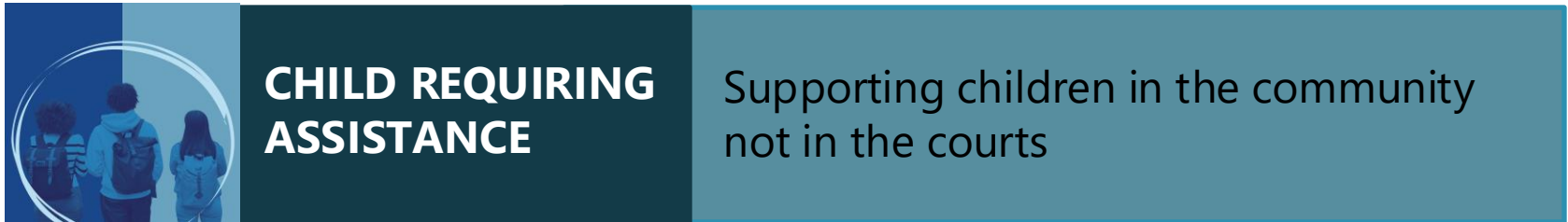
Child Requiring Assistance

- **Stigmatize children** as “insubordinate” or “bad kid”
- Juvenile Court has no “**special**” **services or access** beyond community, except removal to DCF custody
- Court involvement may **delay access to services**
- **Services received $\neq$ service needs**
- Black and Latino youth **3x more likely** than white youth to have a CRA filing
- **60% of school-based CRA filings**, student needed IEP/504 evaluation or plan

An Act regarding families and children in need of assistance (H265/S141)

- **Family Resource Centers** convene multidisciplinary case management team to divert from CRA filing
- Requirements on schools and probation to confirm **court is last resort**
- **Raise lower age** of CRA filing from 6 to 12
- **Family education** on CRA and alternatives

An Act regarding families and children in need of assistance (H265/S141)



Committee: Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities

Ask your Representative and Senator:

- Co-sponsor H.265 and S.141
- Ask the Committee to report the bill out favorably

An Act addressing school exclusion policies to remedy disparities in educational achievement (H730/S376)



STUDENT EXCLUSION

Keep students facing legal cases in school

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School Discipline

Frequent suspensions and expulsions increases risk of legal system involvement:

- Youth are more than twice as likely to be arrested during periods when they are suspended or expelled from school.
- This increased likelihood of arrest applies both to students with and without a prior history of delinquent behavior.

Children who have been expelled or suspended from school once are much more likely to be disciplined similarly again, and twice as likely than their peers to drop out of school.

Systemic Pathways

- Zero-tolerance policies (such as Ch. 71 §§37H-37H¹/₂)
- School funding cuts that have reduced the number of counselors and social workers that can support students with behavioral concerns
- Presence of law enforcement in schools

An Act addressing school exclusion policies to remedy disparities in educational achievement (H730/S376)



STUDENT EXCLUSION

Keep students facing legal cases in school

H.730

Committee: House Ways and Means Committee

Ask your Representative:

Ask the Committee to report the bill for a House vote

S.376

Committee: Education

Ask your Senator:

- Co-Sponsor the Senate bill
- Ask the Committee to report the bill out favorably

An Act To Promote Public Safety and Better Outcomes for Youths (H1923/S1061)



RAISE THE AGE

Raising age of prosecution as adults from age 18 to age 21

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Juvenile Justice Involvement



Jurisdiction of the Juvenile Justice System

Youth age 12-17 at the time of the offense

*The care, custody and discipline of the children brought before the court shall approximate **as nearly as possible that which they should receive from their parents**, and that, as far as practicable, **they shall be treated, not as criminals, but as children in need of aid, encouragement and guidance.** Proceedings against children under said sections **shall not be deemed criminal proceedings.***

MGL Ch. 119 § 53

Adult Prosecution and Sentencing

Juvenile Prosecution | Adult Sentencing: Youth prosecuted as “**Youthful Offenders**” may receive adult sentences but are considered juveniles for CORI purposes.

Adult Prosecution:

- Youth 14+ charged with first or second degree murder (Superior Court)
- Youth age 18+ for any offense are in the jurisdiction of the criminal legal system (District or Superior Court).

Adult Sentencing: Incarceration in county houses of correction for sentences of 2½ years or less and incarceration in the state Department of Correction for sentences over 2½ years.

Why Treat 18- to 20-year-olds differently?

Adulthood Is a Gradual Transition, Not a Fixed Age



Why Treat 18- to 20-year-olds differently?

Adulthood Is a Gradual Transition, Not a Fixed Age



Still eligible for DESE Educational Services



Rent a car without underage fees



Legally Drink Alcohol,
Smoke Tobacco or
Marijuana,
Gamble,
Buy Firearms or
Ammunition,
Serve as a Police Officer;
Can still be seen by
Pediatrician



Transition age youth
in child welfare
system may receive
DCF services up to
age 23



Required to acquire
own health insurance



WHAT MAKES THE **JUVENILE** JUSTICE SYSTEM DIFFERENT?

IT IS BETTER AT REDUCING LEGAL SYSTEM INVOLVEMENT



DIVERSION

The juvenile justice system has greater opportunities for formal diversion and alternatives to arrest for low-level arrest.

IT PROVIDES LEGAL PROTECTIONS UNIQUE TO YOUTH



DISPARITIES

Federal and state mandates to reduce racial/ethnic disparities. Model regulations to protect LGBTQ youth in confinement.

POLICE INTERACTION



Special protections during arrest and confinement.

ITS PRIMARY EMPHASIS IS ON REHABILITATION



EDUCATION & PROGRAMMING

Youth in the juvenile system must attend school, family engagement and have more access to mental and behavioral health services.

SOLITARY CONFINEMENT



DYS has banned the use of solitary confinement since 2013. Young people in adult prisons disproportionately end up in solitary.

IT HAS FEWER COLLATERAL CONSEQUENCES



CONFIDENTIALITY

Juvenile proceedings are confidential and juvenile records do not appear on a CORI.

ADJUDICATION VS CONVICTION



A juvenile "adjudication" does not carry the collateral consequences and repercussions of a conviction.

BETTER OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH, PUBLIC SAFETY AND TAX PAYERS



LOWER RECIDIVISM

Young people incarcerated in the adult system recidivate at more than DOUBLE the rate of similar youth exiting DYS

IMPROVED PUBLIC SAFETY

MA has seen a 51% reduction in juvenile crime rates since raising the age to include 17 year-olds.



Collateral Consequences of an Adult Prosecution

- Juvenile rights during arrest do not apply
- There is no judicial pre-arraignment diversion
- Court proceedings are public
- Court record is accessible prior to sealing eligibility
- Collateral consequences of a “conviction” are more severe than an “adjudication”
- Solitary confinement is utilized
- No explicit legal requirements to address racial and ethnic disparities
- No explicit protection for LGBTQ youth

An Act To Promote Public Safety and Better Outcomes for Youths (H1923/S1061)



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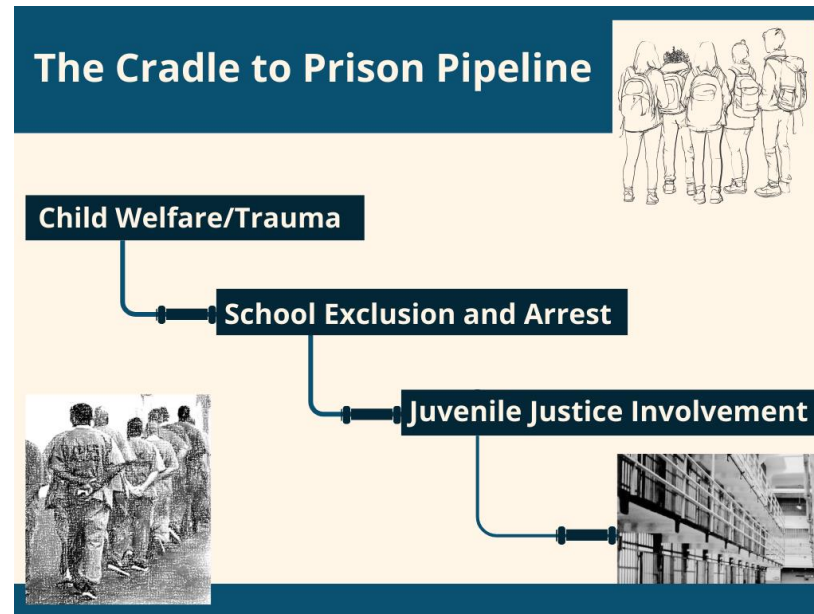
Committee: Judiciary

Ask your Representative and Senator:

- Co-sponsor H.1923 and S.1061
- Hearing for Senate bill TODAY!
- Hearing for House bill TBA
- Ask the Committee to report the bill out favorably

Cradle to Prison Pipeline Legislative Briefing

Criminal Justice Reform Caucus



September 30, 2025 | 11am
State House | Room 437



Citizens for Juvenile Justice (CfJJ) is the only independent, non-profit statewide organization working exclusively to reform and reimagine the juvenile justice and other youth serving systems in Massachusetts. Our mission is to advocate for statewide systemic reform to achieve equitable youth justice.



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CFJJ@CFJJ.ORG



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44 SCHOOL STREET, SUITE 415, BOSTON MA 02108

617.338.1050 | WWW.CFJJ.ORG