

**PRESS RELEASE**

**NEWS**  
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**Senate Passes Bill to Keep Kids Out of Adult Jails**  
**Next Step: The Governor's Office**

**Oregon State Senate:** A bill that would make juvenile detention rather than adult jail the default place of detention for youth charged as an adult (including Measure 11 crimes) passed the Senate today. Now all it needs is the Governor's signature to become law. Under current practice most youth who are arrested on adult charges are held in adult jails – places ill equipped to keep youth safe or provide the education and interventions that can help youth in trouble turn their lives around.

Jasmine, a young woman who spent time in both adult and juvenile jails starting at the age of 16, testified in front of the House and Senate judiciary committees about her experiences. “In the adult jail, I saw no hope for me or my future. I was kept in an isolation cell the whole time and didn't have anyone to talk to for help getting life back on track. Luckily, I was sent back to the juvenile detention home and got the guidance I needed.”

“Juvenile facilities are equipped for the specific needs of teenagers. We are able to provide the interventions and education that work best for their future,” said Ken Hales, the Deschutes County Community Justice Director who supported House Bill 2707. Deschutes County is one of several counties in Oregon already implementing the best practice of keeping youth charged as adults in a juvenile detention facility during pre-trial.

“Passage of House Bill 2707 sends a strong messages from legislators that youth should not be held in adult jails,” said Shannon Wight, Associate Director for Partnership for Safety and Justice - the organization that requested the bill. “**Tough crime policy isn't the same as smart policy.** Youth who are locked up in adult jails don't receive age appropriate interventions and are at increased risk for physical and sexual assault. The Safe Kids, Safer Communities bill promotes what we know works best for youth and the public.”

Oregon was identified in a recently released, national report on youth tried as adults, [State Trends: Legislative Victories from 2005 to 2010 Removing Youth from the Adult Criminal Justice System](#) as a state with promising legislation on the horizon. Liz Ryan, President and CEO of the Campaign for Youth Justice which published the report, was thrilled with the news of the bill's passage. “Our country is finally recognizing that youth are different from adults, they respond best to programs that are designed to meet their unique developmental needs, and keeping youth in adult jails isn't safe for youth or for our communities. Oregon has demonstrated its commitment to protecting youth in confinement which is a great step forward.”

Multnomah County Juvenile Department supported the bill as well. Dave Koch, Assistant Director of the Juvenile Services Division stated, “With our partners, we manage these young people, meet their educational, treatment and counseling needs, and provide services geared to reduce their chances of re-offending.”

Jasmine, who asked that her last name not be used, has been out of trouble for five years and is currently attending Portland Community College. She is thankful for her time in juvenile detention: “I’ve learned from my mistakes and now I am studying criminal justice so I can be a juvenile probation officer and help other young people turn their lives around.”