

# Testimony in Senate Judiciary on H. 175 April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Vermont Children and Family Council for Prevention Programs

Presenters: Karen Vastine, Chair

Amy Davenport, Vice Chair

## Who We Are

- Vermont's Advisory Group for juvenile justice and delinquency prevention as required by the federal Juvenile Justice And Delinquency Prevention Act and the Juvenile Justice Reform Act
- 21 members appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate
- Federally required specific representatives including youth, victim advocates, law enforcement, non-profits and more
- Attached to DCF for planning and administrative functions

## What we do

- Support DCF's compliance monitoring with respect to the core requirements of the JJRA
- Provide grants from Vermont's annual allocation of OJJDP funds for projects related to juvenile justice and the prevention of juvenile delinquency
- Support implementation of Raise the Age legislation
  - Grant to CRG to measure recidivism rate of 18 and 19 year olds prior to RTA to get a benchmark to measure success
  - Funding to develop and implement a Domestic Violence Accountability program
- Identify and reduce racial and ethnic disparities among youth who have contact with the JJ system

## What we Monitor

- The 4 Core Requirements of the JJRA
  - Deinstitutionalization of status offenders
  - Separation of juveniles from adult inmates
  - Removal of juveniles from adult jails and lockups
  - Address Racial and Ethnic Disparities

# The Case for Modernizing Our Authorizing Legislation

- Current authorizing legislation dates back to 1986
- Our 1986 statutory charge:
  - Develop a State Primary Prevention plan
  - Administer the newly created Children's Trust Fund
- This charge predated the receipt of federal OJJDP funds and the federal requirement for a SAG and a three-year plan focused on juvenile justice
- Over time, federal requirements overrode the Council's ability to comply with the original charge and the proliferation of primary prevention efforts rendered the original charge obsolete

## Major Changes in H. 175

- Name change: Council for Equitable Youth Justice
- Membership increase from 21 to 25
- Responsibilities congruent with the 4 core requirements of federal law (JJRA)
- Requires Council to develop a State Juvenile Justice Plan with DCF every 3 years
- Requires Council to submit a written report to the Governor and the Legislature every 2 years
- Requires Council to be data driven and include voices of youth and families

Frames Our  
Mission so it is  
consistent with  
Legislative  
Findings in  
33 V.S.A.  
§ 5101a

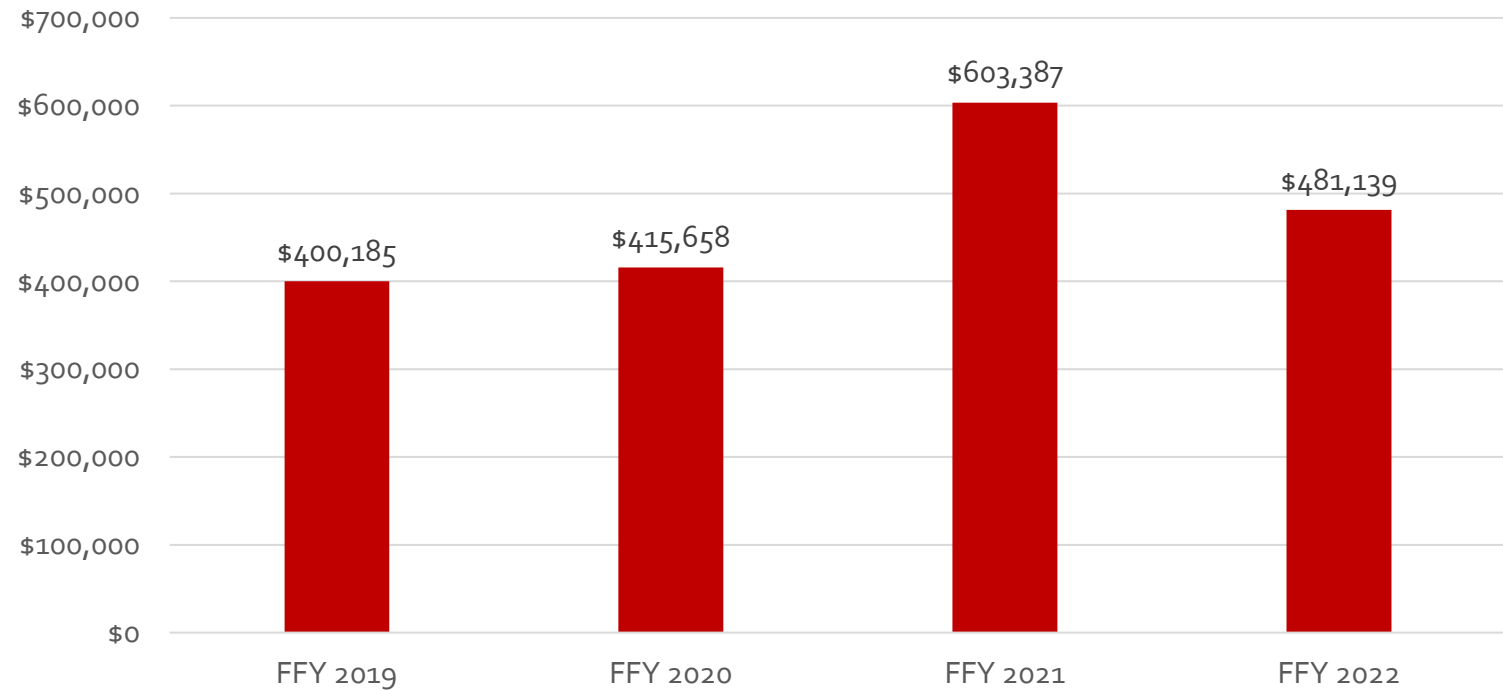
a) The General Assembly finds and declares as public policy that an effective juvenile justice system protects public safety; connects youths and young adults to age-appropriate services that reduce the risk of reoffense; and, when appropriate, shields youths from the adverse impact of a criminal record.

(b) In order to accomplish these goals, the system should be based on the implementation of data-driven evidence-based practices that offer a broad range of alternatives, such that the degree of intervention is commensurate with the risk of reoffense.

(c) High-intensity interventions with low-risk offenders not only decrease program effectiveness, but are contrary to the goal of public safety in that they increase the risk of recidivism. An effective youth justice system includes pre-charge options that keep low-risk offenders out of the criminal justice system altogether. (Added 2017, No. 201 (Adj. Sess.), § 1.)

# Vermont's Allocation of Federal Funding from the JJRA

## JJRA Dollars Allocated to Vermont



The loss of funds in FFY22 was due to compliance issues with the core requirements of the JJRA



Thank you  
Happy to answer any  
questions

For more information about the Council please visit:

[Children and Family Council for Prevention Programs](#)