

**Testimony as Submitted in Support of HB23-1249: Reduce Justice Involvement for Young Children
by Megan Ives, Senior Policy Analyst at the Colorado Children's Campaign**

**House Judiciary Committee
April 5, 2023, 1:30 p.m.
Old State Library**

Dear Mr. Chair and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of HB23-1249. My name is Megan Ives and I am the Senior Policy Analyst at the Colorado Children's Campaign.

The Colorado Children's Campaign is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, policy, research and advocacy organization, committed to securing every chance for every child in Colorado since our founding in 1985. That includes advocating for better support for our state's youth and adolescents.

We appreciate Representatives Armagost and Gonzales-Gutierrez for their leadership on this bill to improve outcomes for young children who commit a crime.

First and foremost, we support this bill because pushing young children in this age group, who are mostly 4th, 5th, and 6th graders, through the criminal legal system is misaligned with our contemporary understanding of pediatric brain science and development. Research by the National Institute of Justice illuminates the strong connection between experiences of childhood trauma and juvenile justice system involvement, as well as the high rates of exposure to violence within correctional and residential facilities. Children need services and interventions, not punitive responses that compound trauma.

The available evidence tells us our current system is not only failing in its intended mission of improving public safety, but also inflicting an immense toll on our children. In Colorado, roughly 60% of youth in our juvenile justice system recidivate within 3 years, an even higher rate than adults in the state. Childhood arrest and detainment is associated with increased mental health risk, and poor educational and career outcomes.

We believe the bill's expansion of Collaborative Management Programs (CMPs) is the appropriate avenue to connect children to services. CMPs are designed to work with children and families who are at-risk or currently involved in multiple systems, such as child welfare, schools, juvenile justice, and foster care, creating tailored service plans that meet unique needs. CMPs and our human services systems are designed to center the needs of both the child and their family, with a focus on prevention and intervention services that keep families together.

We support this evidence-informed effort to improve outcomes for youth and reduce system involvement, benefiting our communities immensely in both the short and long-term. We urge a yes vote on HB23-1249.

Thank you,

Megan Ives
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Cited sources:

1. 30th Annual Recidivism Evaluation of the Colorado Division of Youth Services [Recid2022.pdf - Google Drive](#)
2. [Why Youth Incarceration Fails: An Updated Review of the Evidence – The Sentencing Project](#)
3. [Examining the Relationship Between Childhood Trauma and Involvement in the Justice System | National Institute of Justice \(ojp.gov\)](#)