



# The **CAMPAIGN** for the **FAIR SENTENCING** of **YOUTH**

## WHO WE ARE

The Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth (CFSY) is a national nonprofit that leads efforts to ban juvenile life without parole and other extreme prison sentences for children. The CFSY is an equity-driven organization that explicitly works to dismantle the racial disparities, social injustices, and residual harms caused by the legal system. Through partnerships with advocacy organizations, businesses, and other stakeholders, the CFSY supports survivors of youth violence, those incarcerated as children who are still serving or have been released, and their respective families and communities.

Our mission is to catalyze the just and equitable treatment of children in the United States by demanding a ban on life without parole and other extreme sentences for children who cause harm; advancing alternative responses that focus on their unique characteristics as children, including their capacity for change; and creating opportunities for formerly incarcerated youth to thrive as adults and lead in their communities.

## WHAT WE DO

At the CFSY, we lead and support campaigns to ban life without parole and other extreme sentences for children. Led by those directly impacted by these policies, we build coalitions, educate policymakers and key stakeholders, and advance reforms that ensure youth receive fair chances. The CFSY utilizes a multi-pronged approach to reform including serving as a convener; educating target audiences; advocating for reforms; bolstering legal strategies to ban life-without-parole sentences for children; and developing a wide range of partnerships to provide access to resources and opportunities for returning individuals and their families to prosper.

Since the CFSY was launched, we have fostered broad bipartisan support for reform and helped instigate incredible momentum. The number of states that ban life without parole for children quadrupled in just five years, and the U.S. Supreme Court has stepped in three times to limit the sentence. Over one thousand people told as children they were worth nothing more than dying in prison have been freed, and thousands have received new sentences short of life without parole, giving them hope of a fair chance.

## ADVOCACY & PUBLIC EDUCATION

Stories change hearts, minds, and policies. We use the media to persuade key decision makers and influencers to create a culture amenable to the reforms we seek. As in all areas, we center the expertise of people directly impacted by extreme sentencing of youth. They boldly, persuasively share their stories of personal pain and redemption in targeted outlets that help advance our policy goals and further humanize people once deemed monstrous “superpredators.” CFSY staff members serve as expert resources to the media

about the facts and nuances of complex legal issues related to extreme sentencing of children, national trends in reform, and provide updated research and data. In addition, we shape and place opinion pieces from other strategic spokespeople, whether legislators, prosecutors, former judges, or members of our staff.

## STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

The CFSY has expanded its strategic focus to develop a national strategy aimed at supporting the human dignity and prosperity of people who were initially sentenced as children to life in prison and who are now returning to their communities. This initiative is deeply informed by members of our Incarcerated Children's Advocacy Network (ICAN) and centers on developing cooperative partnerships with diverse stakeholders to provide the resources and services necessary for people who are returning home, and their families and neighborhoods, to thrive. We create meaningful opportunities for partners to help mitigate critical social issues while enhancing their business value and meeting their social impact goals; increase access to job training, employment, skill development, mentoring and access to resources to advance the success and wellbeing of people returning home; connect private sector partners with formerly incarcerated individuals to support education and co-learning; and convene advisory groups and other avenues for training and technical assistance for partners new to fair chance hiring.

## LEGAL STRATEGIES

We support legal strategies across the nation by bringing together defense attorneys and mitigators representing children challenging extreme sentences; we develop targeted resources for system stakeholders (including trial guidelines, parole board resources, judicial bench cards, and model briefs); we help implement new laws following state-level abolition of extreme sentences for children; we educate parole boards and other system stakeholders; and we rally members of the private bar to represent individuals deserving relief due to our reform efforts.

## OUTREACH

The CFSY centers the expertise of individuals directly impacted by the injustices we work to resolve - chief among them, individuals formerly or currently incarcerated as children for serious crimes, victims of crimes committed by children, and the families of both. Central features of this effort include responding to 100% of correspondence we get from people serving extreme sentences, and acting in our convener role to establish networks of people with shared experiences. Through our Incarcerated Children's Advocacy Network, we also partner with them to develop their skills and elevate them as movement leaders. During in-person convenings and regular conference calls, we provide support and information on diverse topics, ranging from advocacy basics and media training to self-care strategies to help heal from the pain wrought by their experiences. Just as importantly, we support them as they advance reforms by sharing their stories with decision makers and advocating directly for needed change.