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*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

With Lawmakers Back in Albany Negotiating the Budget, Coalition Demands Inclusion of the Youth Justice Innovation Fund

(ALBANY, NY) — [The Coalition to Protect Raise The Age: Build Futures, Invest In Youth](#) — a coalition representing more than 220 organizations across the state — issued the following statement on budget negotiations, calling on lawmakers to ensure the inclusion of the Youth Justice Innovation Fund in New York’s Fiscal Year 2027 Budget.

“As lawmakers return to Albany to continue working toward finalizing the budget, we urge them to seize this opportunity to invest in what works. The Youth Justice Innovation Fund would direct \$50 million in already allocated Raise the Age funding to community-based programs that prevent harm, reduce incarceration, and support young people across New York. At a time when too many resources remain unspent or misdirected, this is a smart, evidence-based investment in public safety and in the future of our youth. We call on Governor Kathy Hochul, Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Speaker Carl Heastie, and lawmakers to include the Youth Justice Innovation Fund in the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget.”

Background

The Youth Justice Innovation Fund, sponsored by New York State Senator Cordell Cleare and Assembly Member Gabriella A. Romero, would direct \$50 million to community-based organizations to provide a continuum of services, from prevention and early intervention to alternatives to detention, placement, and incarceration, for youth aged 12 through 25.

The Innovation Fund builds on successful statewide efforts like Project RISE, which has brought over \$30 million to communities to combat gun violence through public health strategies, including credible messenger and violence interruption programs.

In the eight years since Raise the Age was enacted, only a third of the \$1.71 billion appropriated for statewide Raise the Age youth justice work has been spent. Of that, less than 20 percent has been used to support community-based alternatives to incarceration and detention, diversion, and reentry programs that research shows have equal or better outcomes than confinement, and at a far lower cost.

The Youth Justice Innovation Fund would ensure that state tax dollars are directed to the most effective services and programs for young people who may come into contact with law enforcement. The fund would direct \$50 million of the \$250 million already allocated annually for Raise the Age to a state-administered fund that would

provide grants to community-based organizations to deliver a continuum of services for youth aged 12 through 25.

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