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

Statement from the Coalition to Protect Raise the Age on New York State’s FY27 Executive Budget

(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 New York State’s Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Budget:

“This year, young people and communities across New York faced renewed threats to the progress made under Raise the Age. Thanks to the leadership of the Legislature and sustained advocacy from directly impacted young people, families, service providers, and community organizations, calls for harmful rollbacks were ultimately rejected. At a moment when some sought to return New York to failed policies rooted in incarceration and punishment, lawmakers protected the core promise of Raise the Age: that young people deserve support, opportunity, and pathways to success — not deeper involvement in the criminal legal system.

“At the same time, we are disappointed that the final state budget did not include the Youth Justice Innovation Fund, despite [broad support](#) for the proposal. The 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, particularly in jurisdictions facing significant service gaps. After more than \$1 billion in Raise the Age funds have gone unspent, the Innovation Fund would create a pathway for smart, evidence-based investments in public safety and in the future of our youth.”

“While we are grateful that New York’s leaders stood firm against efforts to weaken Raise the Age, protecting progress is not enough. We must also fully invest in the community-based programs and services that help young people thrive and make communities safer. We will continue organizing, mobilizing, and advocating to ensure the Youth Justice Innovation Fund is enacted next legislative session and that New York fulfills its commitment to young people and their futures.”

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 \$20 million to communities to combat gun violence through public health strategies, including credible messenger and violence interruption programs.

In the nine 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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