

Children's Rights

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<https://www.childrensrights.org/stop-shackling-youth-in-court/>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

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This Letter to the Editor [appeared](#) in the Savannah Morning News on Wednesday, August 28, 2019.

Shackling is a cruel and inhumane practice that children should not have to endure, yet it still happens in juvenile courts throughout Georgia. Young people, most of them charged with [non-violent offenses](#), are brought to the courtroom in leg irons, handcuffs, or both a practice that both demeans the child and undermines the fairness of the legal proceeding.

Though indiscriminate shackling has long been recognized as inappropriate by child welfare and juvenile justice experts across the country including by the American Bar Association (ABA) in their 2015 [resolution](#) opposing the practice reform has not come to Georgia.

An important step forward came in a recent proposal from the Georgia Council of Juvenile Court Judges (CJCJ), which would add limits on the use of physical restraints in juvenile courtrooms. But the rule falls short of guaranteeing that fewer youth will be subjected to shackling. As Childrens Rights urged in our [letter](#) to the Supreme Court of Georgia, the rule must be revised in accordance with the ABAs resolution and direct juvenile courts to use shackling only with appropriate safeguards, after a court has found the restraints necessary.

Mounting evidence shows that the benefits of limiting shackling for minors are myriad. In the nearly 30 states that have [curtailed the shackling of minors](#), judges have been able to conduct juvenile justice hearings [without any negative impact](#) on the safety or order of proceedings. Trusting minors to exhibit good behavior instead of treating them as threats can facilitate their rehabilitation. Conversely, shackling children in court both negatively impacts their future behavior [and](#) fosters a negative perception of the criminal justice system.

It is past time for reform. If we want a fair juvenile justice system that supports young defendants long-term rehabilitation, then limiting the use of physical restraints in courtrooms is imperative.

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