

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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Public Facing Advocacy Writing

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CLEVELAND This morning the ACLU of Ohio and the Juvenile Justice Coalition sent a letter to Cuyahoga County leadership urging the officials to expedite reforms to address the systemic problems at the Cuyahoga County Juvenile Detention Center. Events on January 8 highlighted the facility's issues and sparked a variety of responses from youth advocates and law enforcement officials. The ACLU of Ohio and the Juvenile Justice Coalition (JJC) outlined a three-pronged approach to ensure the safety of youth and staff at the center in a letter to the County Prosecutor, County Council, County Executive, and Administrative Judge.

We urge county leadership to collaborate with juvenile justice experts from outside the county and conduct a thorough assessment of the underlying problems at the facility, said Mike Brickner, senior policy director at the ACLU of Ohio. Adolescent development professionals need to examine the facility from top to bottom and recommend proactive changes. Then, to ensure the recommendations are implemented, there must be accountability measures in place, which have been seriously lacking at the detention center in years past.

Rehabilitation should be at the center of all juvenile justice issues, and the current discussion of moving youth to the adult jails must end now, said Erin Davies, executive director of JJC. County officials must consider alternatives to detention. Jurisdictions across the country are partnering with the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative to create long-term change through data-driven research. With proper funding from the county, we can consider community-based alternatives that will maintain public safety, concluded Davies.

Additionally, the letter requested that a diverse steering committee with a variety of stakeholders be established to oversee the requested changes for reform. Once the stakeholders are identified, including youth in communities most impacted by violence, regular meetings must take place to examine how to reduce violence in our communities. Our continued reliance on detention and dragnet policing practices is clearly not working, concluded Brickner.

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Read the [letter to Cuyahoga County leadership](#).

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