

PRESS RELEASE

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ACLU report *A Looming Crisis* highlights problems with pre-arraignment detention for juveniles

Advocates call on the Legislature to correct “haphazard and ad hoc” system that increases risks to youth and public safety

Boston – The American Civil Liberties Union and Children’s Law Center today released a report examining problems in the Alternative Lock-up Programs (ALPs) currently administered by the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS).

ALPs are free-standing secure detention facilities that hold recently-arrested children when courts are closed in the evenings, weekends and holidays. (Federal law requires that children be removed from a police station within 6 hours and that they be separated from jailed adults.) The ACLU report, *A Looming Crisis*, reveals a “haphazard and ad hoc” system with significant problems, including:

- the unnecessary and harmful detention of many children, including children age 13 or even younger, who could safely be at home awaiting arraignment;
- inadequate oversight of the operation of Alternative Lock-up Program facilities;
- a disproportionate impact on children and youth of color; and
- inappropriate reliance on a fast-dwindling federal revenue source.

The report calls for the Commonwealth to delegate the administration of ALPs to the Department of Youth Services, to transition to full state funding for ALPs, and to adopt a number of measures to reduce over-reliance on the use of secure detention for juveniles awaiting arraignment.

Citizens for Juvenile Justice (CfJJ), the only statewide juvenile justice advocacy organization in Massachusetts, urges the Patrick Administration and the Legislature to address the problems described in the ACLU report. “Keeping children separate from jailed adults is a crucial part of the juvenile justice system”

said Lael Chester, Executive Director of CfJJ. “However, as the ACLU report documents, the Alternative Lock-up system in Massachusetts has been flawed for many years. Sadly, children are suffering the consequences of a system that is both unfair and ineffective.”

For more information about Citizens for Juvenile Justice, please visit <http://www.cfjj.org>

For a copy of the ACLU Report *A Looming Crisis: The Secure Detention of Youth After Arrest and Before Arraignment in Facilities Administered by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security*, please visit <http://www.aclum.org>