



5100 W. HARRISON. CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60644
1-800-LAW-REP-4 · www.first-defense.org

To the Cook County Board of Commissioners and Whom it May Concern:

First Defense Legal Aid (“FDLA”) enthusiastically supports the “Cook County Board of Commissioners Resolution Urging the Illinois General Assembly to Pass HB 172 To Restore Judicial Discretion in the Transfer of Juveniles to Adult Court.” FDLA urges the Illinois General Assembly to help a generation of young people, growing up and learning in the most harsh conditions, to become productive, law-abiding adults by restoring judicial discretion in the transfer of these juvenile to adult court; This reform means that some may avoid the increased violence and increased recidivism statistics that accompany adult transfer.

FDLA is the only way juveniles in police custody might access free, nonprofit 24-hour legal defense at the police station when they are accused of a crime. When alerted to an arrest, our on-call attorneys go to the police stations to let youth know their rights and how to invoke them, and when possible advocate for informal and formal station adjustments, diversion, medical treatment if needed, and educate the youth and family about the next stages of the process. We also conduct workshops and street outreach to educate Chicagoans about the law and their rights.

The diverse back-stories and experiences of our hotline clients, and participants in our Know Your Rights trainings in community organizations, faith congregations, and schools throughout Chicago, show us the importance of judicial discretion on adult transfers. This is an urgent reform to simply allow judges to consider transfer as an option, not a blanket mandate, for youth accused of crimes.

FDLA supports of the “Cook County Board of Commissioner’s Resolution Urging the Illinois General Assembly to Pass HB 172 To Restore Judicial Discretion in the Transfer of Juveniles to Adult Court,” to allow judges discretion, not a strict formula, to determine when it is appropriate to transfer a youth to adult court.

Very Truly,

Eliza Solowiej

Eliza Solowiej
Executive Director
773.354.8581