

STATEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS FOR KIDS ON HOUSE OVERSIGHT BILLS TARGETING CHILDREN IN D.C.'S CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

The U.S. House Oversight Committee advanced several bills that would roll back bipartisan reforms designed to protect children in the justice system.

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, September 11, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On Wednesday, September 10, 2025 the U.S. House Oversight Committee

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*James Dold, CEO & Founder,
HRFK*

advanced several bills that would dramatically roll back bipartisan reforms designed to protect children in the justice system.

Among the measures:

- H.R. 5140 lowers the age at which children can be automatically tried as adults for certain offenses from sixteen to fourteen.
- H.R. 4922 eliminates judicial discretion when sentencing children in adult criminal court, forcing judges to apply the same mandatory minimums used for adults.
- H.R. 5242 repeals D.C. legislation that ended life without

parole sentences for children and created meaningful opportunities for release after 15 years of incarceration.

James Dold, CEO of [Human Rights for Kids](#), issued the following statement:

“We are deeply disappointed to see an attempted rollback of policies that treat children differently than adults in our criminal justice system and that were modeled after similar reforms passed in conservative states. The data shows that the children in our criminal justice system were overwhelmingly victims of sexual, physical, and emotional abuse, as well as human trafficking, prior to committing their offense. Their delinquent and criminal behavior is inextricably linked to the abuse and exploitation they experienced. This does not excuse their behavior, but it must be taken into account by courts when deciding how to hold them accountable.”

Human Rights for Kids’ [two-year national study](#) on trauma among children tried as adults found:

- More than 70% of youth were physically and emotionally abused.
- Nearly half (45%) were sexually abused.
- 85% came from homes where one or both parents were absent, often due to incarceration.
- Nearly one-third were victims of sex and/or labor trafficking.

“While it is important to acknowledge that public safety considerations may require that in rare cases children who commit the most serious offenses be tried in adult court, those decisions should be made by a judge — as should the sentence imposed,” Mr. Dold continued. “These proposed changes lack the important nuance that should guide any civilized society when determining how to respond to serious crimes committed by its children.”

Policies that automatically charge children as adults, require harsh mandatory minimums for youth, and allow life without parole sentences for children run counter to universally accepted [human rights norms](#), including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

About Human Rights for Kids

Human Rights for Kids (HRFK) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion and protection of the human rights of children. We use an integrated, multi-faceted approach which consists of research & public education, coalition building & grassroots mobilization, and policy advocacy & strategic litigation to advance critical human rights on behalf of children in the United States and around the world.

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