



BECAUSE THE CONSEQUENCES AREN'T MINOR

## **Governor Rick Perry Refuses to Protect Vulnerable Populations in Texas Jails and Prisons**

*National Campaign Calls for Full Certification of the Prison Rape Elimination Act in Texas*

**WASHINGTON (April 4, 2014)** – The Campaign for Youth Justice, an organization committed to the protection of children and youth incarcerated throughout the United States, condemns a recent statement by the Texas governor that he will not certify whether Texas’s prisons and jails are in compliance with the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA), which was enacted by a unanimous vote of Congress and signed in to law by President George W. Bush in 2003.

In a letter sent to Attorney General Holder on March 28, 2014, Texas Governor Rick Perry stated that he will not provide the Department of Justice with information on Texas’ compliance with PREA. The purpose of the Act is to “provide for the analysis of the incidence and effects of prison rape in federal, state, and local institutions and to provide information, resources, and recommendations and funding to protect individuals from prison rape.”

“Prison rape is not a bargaining chip. Thousands of children under 18 are placed in Texas jails and prisons each year with real potential of victimization. Governor Perry is behind the times and should be ashamed at the potential harm he will cause to thousands of inmates in Texas,” said Carmen Daugherty, Policy Director for the Campaign for Youth Justice.

PREA restricts the placement of youth in adult jails and prisons. Regulations approved by the U.S. Department of Justice state that, “as a matter of policy, the Department support(s) strong limitations on the confinement of adults with juveniles.” Compliance with the Youthful Inmate Standard of the law calls on states to limit contact between youth and adults in adult facilities by banning the housing of youth in the general adult population, prohibiting contact between youth and adults in common areas, and ensuring youth are always supervised by staff. States must also limit the use of isolation, which causes or exacerbates mental health problems for youth.

Research shows that youth are not safe in adult jails and prisons and are at the greatest risk of sexual victimization. According to research by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, youth under the age of 18 represented 21% of all reported and substantiated inmate-on-inmate sexual violence in jails in 2005, and 13% in 2006. These victimization rates are all the more inexcusable as only one percent of jail inmates are juveniles. Thus, contrary to Governor Perry’s assertion, PREA’s requirement of sight and sound separation of kids from adults carries a substantial benefit to the state and its inmates.

The National Prison Rape Elimination Commission found that, “more than any other group of incarcerated persons, youth incarcerated with adults are probably at the highest risk for sexual

abuse.” Research also shows that youth are 36 times more likely to commit suicide in an adult jail than in a juvenile detention facility.

Dozens of facility directors, researchers, religious communities, criminal justice professors, advocates, and families provided data and insight into the development of the PREA standards, contrary to the governor’s assertion that the standards “have been created in a vacuum.”

Youth must be removed from adult jails and prisons to fully comply with PREA and protect youth from sexual assault. The stakes are too high for noncompliance. It is crucial that governors fully protect children from the dangers of adult jails and prisons.

*The Campaign for Youth Justice (CFYJ) is a national organization dedicated to ending the practice of trying, sentencing and incarcerating youth under the age of 18 in the adult criminal justice system. For more background on this issue, please visit <http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org>.*

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