CREATE SAFETY STANDARDS FOR YOUTH IN SECURE CARE FACILITIES

When children make mistakes, the best thing we can do for them and our communities is to help them grow into productive members of society. To do so, we must provide children in the state’s care with environments and programs that are safe, effective, and rehabilitative.

Currently, however, Louisiana lacks statewide standards for state-run juvenile secure care facilities, even though it regulates conditions in locally run, temporary detention centers. This simply doesn’t make sense. We would never send a child to a daycare that did not have clear safety codes.

In order to keep kids safe and ensure their rehabilitation, Louisiana must establish statewide standards for conditions of confinement.

Creating Safety Standards is **SAFE**

- Children’s safety in state custody should be our number one concern. Without mandatory conditions standards, how can we hold facilities accountable for safety?
- A lack of standards means that problematic practices, like solitary confinement, are not regulated by state law. Solitary confinement can be psychologically ruinous, causing conditions such as anxiety, depression, and even psychosis. But the damage is especially severe and long-lasting for children, whose young brains are still developing.

Creating Safety Standards is **SMART**

- The reason the juvenile justice system exists is to hold children accountable for their actions in developmentally appropriate ways, and ensure that they are prepared to lead productive lives. In order be effective, we need standards for the environment and programs in our secure facilities.

Creating Safety Standards is **COST-EFFECTIVE**

- It should cost the state little to no money to create conditions standards for secure care facilities, as various measures are already in place but have not been codified into law.
- Louisiana can avoid costly lawsuits, such as the one that shut down the Tallulah Correctional Center, by implementing mandatory safety standards.
- Children who are held in safe and effective facilities are less likely to reoffend when they return to their communities, which makes us safer and saves taxpayer dollars.

Creating Safety Standards is **FAIR**

- Without mandatory standards or oversight mechanisms, the conditions of confinement in secure facilities are subject to changes in leadership. The quality of care should not be dependent upon whoever is currently the Deputy Secretary of the Office of Juvenile Justice. When it comes to the safety of children, we need greater consistency and more accountability.