

GHIAA ACTION ALERT

Topic: Criminal Justice

Background:

There is an intentional misinformation campaign being promulgated by a group called “Safe Streets CT.” This group is a front for a political strategy in Connecticut designed to roll back recent and successful reforms in youth and criminal justice and to unseat politicians who appear weak on crime. “Safe Streets CT” is using recent spikes in car thefts to allege a major rise in crime rates in Connecticut’s suburbs, linking without data, urban youth (code for black and brown children) to these thefts. To learn more about this issue, view this video produced by GHIAA organizers and leaders by [clicking here](#) or visiting www.cljct.org/youth-justice.

GHIAA worked with partners to pass Clean Slate Legislation and the Police Accountability Bill. Other youth justice advocates waged successful campaigns on a number of other important efforts, many of which are described [here](#).

Examples of policies being suggested as a response to the “rise in crime” fear include an interest in lowering the age at which we can arrest youth (currently a 10-year-old can be arrested and they want it to be lowered to age 7), there are efforts to make it easier to detain youth, and there are efforts to reopen a youth prison. This rise in crime rhetoric is being used to advance the kinds of policies that stand in stark contrast to the criminal justice and anti-racism efforts GHIAA supports.

The action:

Right now, Connecticut is in a legislative session until May 4.

It is possible that law makers will attempt to pass legislation that attempts to “crack down” on youth as a way of showing they are being “tough on crime.” GHIAA is fighting to make sure this does not happen as this legislation would be a knee jerk reaction to this false rhetoric around crime and theft. It would result in more Black and Brown youth being incarcerated.

How to Respond:

- Identify your local legislators. You can do so by searching here: <https://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/menu/CGAFindleg.asp>
- Ideally, it would be best to set up a 30-minute meeting soon with your state senator and representative to discuss this issue. GHIAA organizers are available to help.
- Democrats and Republicans need to be contacted. Legislators on both sides are considering damaging legislation.

- Individually, please call AND email your legislators. Here is a sample letter or language for a phone call:

Dear Senator/Representative:

Hello. My name is _____ and I am your constituent. My address is _____ . I am also a member of [name your congregation] and we are members of the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance, along with 50 other congregations in Greater Hartford. We are aware of the misinformation campaign happening around car thefts and the rise in crime rhetoric which is being linked to youth without data to support such claims. We oppose any legislation that aims to roll back positive youth justice reforms and/or make it easier to detain and arrest youth. Now is the time to be investing in issues that really matter to youth – mental health treatment, affordable housing, public education, job training, healthcare.... services that all youth deserve access to outside of the criminal justice system.

While we have seen isolated spikes in crime, we are not seeing a crime wave pandemic and I do not support any legislation that aims to crack down on juvenile justice.

[Pick a few data points from our fact sheet or other resources to make your case – it is most effective to write individual letters and not use form letters. Include a few facts from these resources to support your position or letter – this is also useful in educating your elected officials. Do not assume they are getting access to balanced reporting on this issue.]

Resources with data include:

- A report from the TOW institute on car thefts and youth in CT can be found by [clicking here](#).
- NPR produced a segment called, “Fact Checking Claims about Rise in Connecticut Car Thefts” and can be listened to by [clicking here](#).
- For more information on this topic visit www.cljct.org/youth-justice.

I, along with all GHIAA partners, are watching this issue closely. GHIAA produced an educational video on car thefts and the rise in crime fear mongering happening through the “Safe Streets CT” effort and is sharing it among our 50 congregations. We invite you to watch it and share it with any of your constituents who would benefit from this information. www.cljct.org/youth-justice

Sincerely,