*Sample Campaign Launch Press Release*

**For Immediate Release** Contact: Alicia Jones

**December 7, 2017** (123) 456-7890 (cell)

 Alicia.Jones@YouthJusticeYS.org

**Advocates Launch Youth Justice InsertYourState, a Campaign to Close Rand and West Oak Youth Prisons**

**Easton--**Today advocates, youth, and other community members gathered at the YourState capitol building to launch a campaign to close Rand and West Oak, YourState’s largest and oldest youth prisons. The Youth Justice YourState campaign is made up of a broad coalition of community organizations and individuals--including youth and families who have been impacted by YourState’s failed juvenile justice system. Standing on the steps of the capitol building, Youth Justice YourState members held signs and shared remarks to bring legislative and public attention to the fact that, in YourState and across the country:

* **Youth prisons are unsafe:** An estimated 25% of youth in YourState youth prisons have been physically assaulted and 10% have been sexually assaulted.
* **Youth prisons are unfair:** African-American youth are 4 times as likely and Latino youth are 2 times as likely to be incarcerated in YourState than white youth.
* **Youth prisons do not increase public safety:** Research in YourState and nationally has shown that incarceration can actually increase re-offense rates.
* **Youth prisons hurt families:** Many families in YourState have to travel 2 or more hours to reach the facilities where their children are incarcerated, and are often left out of treatment planning decisions.
* **Youth prisons are expensive**: YourState spends millions of dollars each year on incarcerating youth when community-based programming could serve most of justice-involved young people for a fraction of the cost.

Concurrent with the launch, Youth Justice YourState released a report outlining the problems with the current youth justice system and recommending specific changes, including closing Rand and West Oak and redirecting the cost savings to create a continuum of community-based alternatives.

“It is far past time to fix YourState’s broken juvenile justice system,” says Rhonda Jackson, Youth Justice YourState campaign director. “We need to stop wasting taxpayer money on youth prisons that we know don’t work, and invest in community-driven, therapeutic programs.”

Youth Justice YourState’s Jim Moore adds, “Too many young people come out of West Oak much worse than they went in. The justice system is supposed to be ‘rehabilitating’ people but most youth don’t get helpful services or programs while incarcerated, and after so much time away, they have a hard time getting back into school, and fitting in with their families. We need to help youth overcome the challenges in their lives, not give them more.”

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*Youth Justice YourState is a coalition of community organizations, advocates, youth and families working to close YourState’s youth prisons and encourage reinvestment in proven therapeutic and community-based interventions as an alternative to incarceration.*