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**For Black Lives to Matter, We Must #FreeOurYouth**

*Juvenile Justice Coalition demand release of detained and incarcerated Ohio youth*

Columbus, OH, July 2020 — Recently, one of the mothers that works with the [Juvenile Justice Coalition \(JJC\)](#) celebrated the freedom of her child from detention in Franklin County after recovering from COVID-19. The teenager was incarcerated in November for his family’s inability to pay bond and remained in the detention center for eight months. Although bail is used sparingly in the juvenile justice system in Ohio, [research](#) shows the cash bail system is constructed to be harmful to those who are Black, Latinx, and poor. In May, he joined the long list of youth who [contracted COVID-19 in juvenile facilities](#). The disparate [impact](#) of the COVID-19 crisis on communities of color is closely tied to the systemic racism of the criminal legal system.

“Seeing one of our young people home with their family and with their support system breathes life into this movement for Black lives. It is a beautiful reminder that we can free our youth, and free ourselves,” said **Tammy Fornier-Alsaada, JJC’s lead organizer.**

In a statement from the young person’s mother, she said:

**“My child was forgotten** in the state’s COVID-19 response, and he just sat there lost in the system.

I’m extremely frustrated because **I’d been pleading with the Franklin County Detention Center** to release my child so he could socially distance safely at home with me. Like many in the youth justice system, he has mental health issues and pre-existing conditions like asthma that make him very vulnerable during this time. He was also pretrial, so I’m not sure why he needed to be held when he is innocent in the eyes of the law.

**He suffered through what was essentially solitary confinement for over 14 days** and received very few showers and food. And the medical care has been very poor so it’s obvious the facility can not properly care for children.

My son is better off with me where I can watch over him. And in the meantime, I need facilities to be **more transparent** and share consistent updates on how they plan to protect youth behind bars.”

As the pandemic worsens, JJC is continuing to [demand](#) the release of youth who are currently detained or incarcerated in both state and local facilities in Ohio, stopping the arrest or incarceration of additional youth, and giving detained youth fully free access to phone and video communication with their families and support systems, amongst other [recommendations](#).

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Juvenile Justice Coalition is a statewide organization that works through policy advocacy and with Ohio youth and families who are at risk of involvement or involved in the juvenile court system.