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Utah Leaders Announce Formation of Juvenile Justice Working Group

SALT LAKE CITY (June 16, 2016) – Governor Gary R. Herbert, Senate President Wayne Niederhauser, House Speaker Greg Hughes, and Utah Supreme Court Chief Justice Matthew Durrant today announced the formation of the interbranch Utah Juvenile Justice Working Group that will conduct a data-driven examination of Utah’s juvenile justice system and issue a comprehensive set of policy recommendations aimed at protecting public safety, holding youth accountable, containing costs, and improving outcomes for youth, families, and communities. The working group, which will report to the Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice (CCJJ), will submit its findings and policy recommendations in a report to state leadership on December 1, 2016 for consideration during the 2017 legislative session.

The launch of the working group builds on the successful 2015 passage of the adult Justice Reinvestment Initiative bill, [HB 348](#). With implementation of [HB 348](#) underway, the launch of

the Utah Juvenile Justice Working Group marks the next step in a comprehensive review of the state's justice system.

"My administration is committed to producing better outcomes from our state's juvenile justice system," Gov. Gary Herbert said. "I look forward to recommendations that use data, research, and input from Utahns across the state to build upon what is working and provide a path forward to improve what is not."

"I am encouraged that we are continuing our justice reform efforts and working to develop comprehensive initiatives for our juvenile justice system," said House Speaker Greg Hughes. "This working group will give us the ability to examine the entire system, which will provide a pathway to help troubled juveniles avoid a future of incarceration and instead become productive members of society."

Formation of the working group comes amid concerns about improving the public safety return on taxpayer investments in Utah's juvenile justice system. Despite high costs for placing youth in state custody, recidivism rates remain stubbornly elevated: a 2014 legislative audit found just over half of youth released from state custody have a new charge within one year.

The group will conduct a comprehensive, data-driven assessment of the state's system, reviewing data from the courts and state agencies, collecting input from Utah stakeholders, and examining how the Utah system can better align with research about what works best to improve juvenile justice outcomes as well as innovations from other states.

"We're calling on Utah's foremost experts from across our state to create a new roadmap for our juvenile justice system," said Senate President Wayne Niederhauser. "We are confident that with this evidence-based process Utah will adopt policies that improve outcomes for our youth, families, and communities, and ultimately achieve a stronger public safety return on investment."

"The working group is charged with examining how we can proactively change our juvenile justice system for the better," said Utah Supreme Court Chief Justice Matthew Durrant. "We must examine what works best as we build a more effective and efficient sentencing and juvenile corrections system. If we do this well, we will not only have fewer youth in our juvenile system, but also fewer entering our adult corrections system."

The 19 member working group, chaired by CCJJ Executive Director Ron Gordon, includes:

- Sen. J. Stuart Adams, Senate 22nd District
- Sen. Todd Weiler, Senate 23rd District
- Rep. Eric Hutchings, House 38th District

- Rep. Lowry Snow, House 74th District
- Judge Michelle Heward, 2nd Judicial District
- Judge James Michie, 3rd Judicial District
- Judge Ryan Evershed, 8th Judicial District
- Steve Anjewierden, Chief of Police Services, Unified Police Department
- Susan Burke, Director of Juvenile Justice Services, Utah Department of Human Services
- Charri Brummer, Deputy Director, Division of Child and Family Services, DHS
- Darin Carver, Clinical Practice Administrator
- Maria Garciaz, Executive Director, NeighborWorks Salt Lake
- Carolyn Hansen, Associate Director, Salt Lake County Division of Youth Services
- Steve Kaelin, Alternative and Adult Education Specialist, Utah State Office of Education
- Troy Rawlings, County Attorney, Davis County
- Dawn Marie Rubio, Utah Juvenile Court Administrator
- Doug Thomas, Director of Substance Abuse and Mental, DHS
- Pam Vickery, Utah Juvenile Defender Attorneys

The state will receive technical assistance from The Pew Charitable Trusts throughout the working group process and the 2017 legislative session.

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