



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Velmanette Montgomery

## The Center for Court Innovation and Youth Courts

SENATOR VELMANETTE MONTGOMERY September 9, 2015



### Changing and Saving Young People's Lives

On September 9, 2015, I convened a meeting with members of the New York State Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic and Asian Legislative Caucus to discuss the importance of a very important program designed by the Center for Court Innovation as a means of diverting young people out of the adult criminal justice system: Youth Courts.

The Center for Court Innovation (CCI) was founded as a public/private partnership between the New York State Unified Court System and the Fund for the City of New York to create a

more effective and humane justice system. The Center's award-winning projects include community based violence prevention projects, alternatives to incarceration, reentry initiatives, court based programs that seek to promote positive individual and family change, and youth courts.

Youth courts provide a second chance for 16 to 18 year olds, by offering an alternative sentencing program for young first-time offenders who commit low-level, nonviolent crimes. Youth volunteers act as judge, jury, lawyers and victim advocates and dispense sentences that usually consist of community service but can include restitution and letters of apology.

As a proud supporter and representative of CCI's Red Hook Community Justice Center, which includes a youth court, I have witnessed firsthand the powerful impact this organization and its innovative programs have made on the lives of my constituents. Young offenders are judged by a literal Jury of their peers who bring their own experiences and points of view to provide extremely specific and effective alternatives to the adult criminal justice experience. Youth Courts provide young people with invaluable experience as participants with the justice system as advocates, prosecutors, judges and juries, and the results are remarkable. Youth Courts are an extremely effective way to break the cradle to grave prison pipeline.