



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **New landmark reform law will give youth a chance to erase past mistakes and protect public safety**

CHICAGO – Landmark juvenile justice reform legislation signed Thursday by Gov. Bruce Rauner will clear roadblocks to success for tens of thousands of Illinoisans whose youthful mistakes have restricted access to education, jobs, and housing.

House Bill 3817 strengthens confidentiality protections against the sharing of juvenile records and expands the number of juvenile records eligible for automatic expungement. The new system of erasing past mistakes and protecting public safety is similar to an American Bar Association model statute and implements most of the recommendations of the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission's 2016 report "Burdened for Life: The Myth of Juvenile Record Confidentiality and Expungement in Illinois."

"As one of the first juvenile justice systems in America, the Illinois system was built on the principle that mistakes made by children should not brand them for life," said Paula Wolff, Director of the Illinois Justice Project. "However, confidentiality protections eroded over time, and a complicated and expensive expungement system has made record clearing uncommon, rather than the norm."

"Loose confidentiality laws and arrest records that follow kids for life make it extremely difficult for youth to overcome their mistakes – can cause families to become homeless, can stall or end a youth's education and can make every road to a job a dead end," said Julie L. Biehl, Director of the Children and Family Justice Center at Northwestern Pritzker School of Law. "This broken system has made our neighborhoods less safe, but this new, balanced law will eliminate some of the burdens for young people attempting to leave their past behind them and lead productive lives."

The Illinois Justice Project commended the HB 3817 sponsors, Rep. Elaine Nekritz, D-Northbrook, and Sen. Michael E. Hastings, D-Tinley Park, as well as Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, who championed these reforms and was a strong advocate of the reforms.

A fact sheet explaining HB 3817 is available on our website ([www.IJJP.org](http://www.IJJP.org))

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### **About the Illinois Justice Project**

Working at the state and local levels, the **Illinois Justice Project (IJJP)** uses research findings to advance proven criminal justice reforms of policies and practices that make communities safer and make the justice system more equitable. Established in 2014 as a legacy project of Metropolis Strategies, the non-profit IJJP is a supporting organization of the Chicago Community Trust and an affiliate of The Commercial Club of Chicago. <http://www.IJJP.org>