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Historic Youth Climate Case Concludes in Montana

Helena, MT—Trial in the landmark youth-led constitutional climate lawsuit *Held v. State of Montana* drew to a close today, marking the end of a week and a half of expert testimony and firsthand, often emotional, accounts from the 16 young Montanans who filed the lawsuit three years prior. The proceedings concluded earlier than expected after the state did not call two of the expert witnesses they had slated to testify, and both parties have now rested their cases.

Our Children's Trust Senior Staff Attorney Nate Bellinger delivered the closing argument for youth plaintiffs, underscoring the high stakes of the case. He emphasized the poignant stories of the plaintiffs and the irrefutable scientific evidence presented by expert witnesses throughout the trial.

"A stable climate system is integral to each and every one of the constitutional rights that have been implicated in this proceeding," Bellinger said. "And plaintiffs have established—through overwhelming evidence—that their rights have been violated."

A ruling in favor of the youth plaintiffs could reshape how the state of Montana determines and sets energy policy in the future, charting a course for the government to protect its youth and future generations from the destructive impacts of climate change. While the state argued the case was focused on a procedural issue, the youth plaintiffs claimed their lives and liberties were at stake, including their constitutional right to a "clean and healthful environment" - and the responsibility of their state government to cease its actions that make the climate worse, harming the youth.

"You've heard the state say this is a boring case about a procedural law. But to the contrary, this is about the plaintiffs' lives, their livelihoods, and their future," Bellinger said.

Judge Seeley will now take the testimony, facts, and stories heard during trial - as well as the many documents admitted into evidence - into consideration as she determines how to rule in this critical case. A ruling is anticipated within weeks, or possibly months, following trial.

"Watching these brave young plaintiffs voice their truths, their fears, and their unwavering hope in the courtroom has been both an emotionally intense and invigorating experience," said Julia Olson, Executive Director & Chief Legal Counsel at Our Children's Trust. "They took the stand and they told

the irrefutable truth of their own experiences as young Montanans living in the midst of a climate crisis, an emergency that their state can actively address if only it has the courage and ethical fortitude to do what the constitution says they must. We eagerly await the Court's decision to uphold this responsibility."

About [Held v. State of Montana](#)

Held v. State of Montana is a constitutional climate lawsuit brought by 16 Montana youth against their State to protect their equal rights to a healthy environment, life, dignity, and freedom. They are suing because their government keeps promoting and supporting fossil fuel extraction and burning, which is making the climate crisis worse, harming the youth plaintiffs.

The youth are suing to protect their state constitutional right to a "clean and healthful environment" as well as the air, waters, wildlife and their public lands that are threatened by drought, heat, fires, smoke, and floods. They are also suing to have their rights to individual dignity and equality enforced under the Montana Constitution.

The youth plaintiffs do not seek money. They are asking the court to declare that Montana's fossil fuel energy policies and actions violate young people's state constitutional rights. The plaintiffs are represented by attorneys with Our Children's Trust, the Western Environmental Law Center, and McGarvey Law.

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Our Children's Trust is the world's only nonprofit public interest law firm that exclusively provides strategic, campaign-based legal services to youth from diverse backgrounds to secure their legal rights to a safe climate. We work to protect the Earth's climate system for present and future generations by representing young people in global legal efforts to secure their binding and enforceable legal rights to a healthy atmosphere and safe climate, based on the best available science. www.ourchildrenstrust.org