

Governor Murphy Signs Bill Clarifying Juveniles' Rights to Attorney Representation

01/12/2024

TRENTON – Governor Phil Murphy today signed [A-3117/S-269](https://pub.njleg.state.nj.us/Bills/2022/A3500/3117_R3.PDF) (https://pub.njleg.state.nj.us/Bills/2022/A3500/3117_R3.PDF), which provides juveniles the right to be represented by counsel at every critical stage of a court proceeding. Critical stages of a court proceeding include all post-dispositional appearances and any interrogation, identification procedure, or other investigative activity involving the juvenile undertaken by law enforcement or prosecutorial personnel subsequent to the filing of the complaint.

"From arrest to deliberation, court proceedings can be a confusing time for a juvenile, especially for those who don't have the finances to afford an attorney. Cementing their right to counsel throughout the process will give them a chance to better navigate the options available to them," **said Governor Phil Murphy**. "Our Administration will continue to prioritize the creation of a stronger and fairer juvenile justice system in New Jersey that better serves all young individuals seeking to rehabilitate their lives."

"The right to counsel enshrined in the Constitution safeguards legal protections and promotes fair and appropriate outcomes within our justice system," **said Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin**. "This legislation further clarifies the contours of this important right in youth justice proceedings."

"By guaranteeing the right to counsel of a juvenile being interrogated by police, this legislation is a significant and much needed reform to our system of juvenile justice," **said New Jersey Public Defender Joseph Krakora**. "I want to thank Governor Murphy and the Legislature for passing it and prioritizing NJ's juvenile justice system."

The prime sponsors of this bill are Senator Shirley Turner and then-Assemblyman, now-Senator Raj Mukherji. Other primary sponsors include Senator Nellie Pou, Assemblyman William Spearman, and Assemblyman Reginald Atkins.

"While juveniles were already entitled to representation, it is our hope that this will help to connect them with an attorney as early as possible in the process," **said Senator Turner**. "Kids are especially vulnerable and this will reduce the possibility of them being subject to inappropriate treatment or punishment, and work to prevent any other form of injustice from occurring."

"Juveniles are inherently vulnerable, which is intensified and sometimes exploited once they enter the criminal justice system," **said Senator Pou**. "We must ensure that these young people are afforded the right to legal representation throughout their time within the system. This new law will make sure that right is guaranteed."

"Young people who face charges need representation by their side," **said Assemblyman William Spearman**. "We don't want juveniles to get into trouble with the law as adults."

"Young people facing criminal charges need support so that they don't become repeat offenders," **said Assemblyman Reginald Atkins**. "They need legal guidance to set them on the right path."

Governor Phil Murphy

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