

Bio

Liz Ryan President & CEO Youth First! Initiative

Liz Ryan is a campaign strategist and youth justice expert, who directs the Youth First! Initiative, a national advocacy campaign to end the incarceration of youth in youth prisons and direct resources towards effective community-based programs for youth. Liz is the founder and former CEO of the Campaign for Youth Justice (CFYJ), which spearheads national efforts to end the practice of trying, sentencing and incarcerating youth in the adult criminal justice system. Since CFYJ was launched in 2004, nearly half the states have reduced the prosecution of youth in adult court. Liz has worked on many campaigns, including the Act 4 Juvenile Justice campaign (Act4JJ) to overhaul the main federal law on youth justice, the Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP), and the No More Oak Hills campaign to successfully close the notorious Oak Hill Youth Detention Center for DC's youth. An author of numerous opinion editorials, articles and reports, Liz frequently serves as an expert resource to reporters and national media outlets. Liz writes regularly for *The Crime Report*, the *Chronicle of Social Change*, the *Juvenile Justice Information Exchange* and *The Huffington Post*. Recognized as a national leader on youth justice, Liz has served in leadership roles with the National Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention coalition (NJJDP), and currently serves on the Advisory Board for the Youth Advocate Program's Policy Center and the Justice Policy Network. Liz previously worked at the Youth Law Center, the Children's Defense Fund, the Center on Budget & Policy Priorities, and in several management, policy and legislative positions for U.S. Senator Thomas R. Carper during his terms as Governor and member of the U.S. House of Representatives. Liz holds a B.A. from Dickinson College and an M.A. from The George Washington University.