



# 2017 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

## PACE CENTER FOR GIRLS, INC.

Over the past 31 years, PACE Center for Girls has transformed the lives of more than 39,000 at-risk girls providing them with opportunities for a brighter future through trauma-informed education, counseling, training and advocacy. With 19 PACE Centers located across Florida, PACE is a vocal and respected advocate for girls with histories of trauma, mental health challenges, family conflict, and academic instability, risk factors that place girls at risk for delinquency.

Involvement in the juvenile justice system has a significant impact on the future success of girls and imposes tremendous long-term costs to society.<sup>1</sup> Since inception, PACE has partnered with the Florida Legislature and Department of Juvenile Justice to provide a holistic program model that marries educational and academic preparation with delinquency prevention and early intervention services to divert girls from the juvenile justice and child welfare systems and ensure success at home, in school and in their communities.

By investing in prevention and early intervention, girls avoid the delinquency system, escape sexual exploitation, and break generational cycles of poverty and long-term economic dependence. Further, the safety of our society and the returns to taxpayers are significantly enhanced.



During the 2017 legislative session, PACE Center for Girls' will advocate for:

### Comprehensive Systems of Care

- Expand community and public resources for prevention, early intervention and diversion to keep girls out of the delinquency and dependency systems and protect them from sexual violence and exploitation.<sup>2</sup>
- Increase the use of community-based mental health services for youth and assure that these services are appropriately funded and accessible to the population they serve. Services should align with research on adolescent brain development and the effects of trauma on adolescent behavior.
- Reduce the number of youth who are direct filed into the adult system and appropriately serve youth through the Department of Juvenile Justice.<sup>3</sup>

### Education

- Ensure legislative intent is followed by school districts by providing funding, rather than goods or services, to all juvenile justice education programs through the DJJ supplemental in the education funding formula.
- Include annual adjustments to the DJJ supplemental aligned with increases to the base student allocation for public school funding.
- Train school resource officers and educators in trauma-informed practices.

### Resources

- Shift non-recurring funding to recurring funding to maintain PACE Center for Girls' current level of service across the state.
- Secure \$500,000 in new recurring funds to increase community mental health services in Lee/Collier and Broward/Miami-Dade counties.
- Secure \$85,000 in new recurring funds to serve more girls at existing PACE Centers across the state.

<sup>1</sup> The Quarterly Journal of Economics, Juvenile Incarceration, Human Capital and Future Crime: Evidence from Randomly Assigned Judges, 2015 • Edelman, Pater and Watson, Liz. "Improving the Juvenile Justice System for Girls: Lessons from the States." Georgetown Center on Poverty, Inequality and Public Policy. October 2012. <sup>2</sup> "Branded for Life: Florida's Prosecution of Children as Adults under its 'Direct File' Statute." Human Rights Watch. 10 April 2014.

