

# Hartford Courant

## Locking Up Girls Is Not Treatment

Letter to the editor

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The National Juvenile Justice Network recently lauded Connecticut for cutting its juvenile incarceration rate in half. We are, therefore, shocked by the plan to nearly double Connecticut's capacity to lock up girls [Jan. 18, op-ed, "Secure Treatment Facility For Girls Needed"]. Department of Children and Families Commissioner Joette Katz's op-ed calls the proposed second girls' maximum security program a "treatment facility," and it also states that a third of the girls will be there only one to 30 days.

What would a one-day treatment program look like? Why is this treatment facility surrounded by a security fence? This sounds like a design for punishment, not treatment.

Effective therapeutic relationships rely on trust. That's one of reasons that less restrictive programs are most effective at rehabilitating young people. Locking children up does not win their trust.

Nationally and in Connecticut, most girls who enter the juvenile justice system are trauma survivors who are nonviolent and are charged with minor offenses. According to DCF, many of the girls who would be confined in this facility are victims of sex trafficking.

They already know what it is to lose their freedom. Lock up their pimps. Lock up their johns. But please don't inflict more damage on girls who have already been through far too much.

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