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Press Release

Juvenile Cases return to Brookline Court Just Two days after leaving

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Two days after court officials transferred jurisdiction for juvenile cases from the Brookline District Court to the Dedham District Court, advocacy from the Norfolk District Attorney, state legislators, town and county officials, and local activists has caused the courts to amend their decision.

"I credit Brookline's legislative delegation and Select Board for really stepping up immediately," said Norfolk District Attorney Michael W. Morrissey (D-Quincy), who reached out to Senator Cynthia Stone Creem (D-Newton), Representative Tommy Vitolo (D-Brookline) and the rest of the Brookline delegation when he first learned of the change at the end of August. "If I had been the only voice in this fight, I don't know that we would have seen a favorable resolution so quickly."

Brookline attorney and human rights activist Susan K. Howards reached out to Morrissey on August 26 to alert him of the impending change in jurisdiction. "I immediately reached out to Representative Vitolo and Senator Creem, who then brought their colleagues into the discussion."

Morrissey and the Brookline Delegation in the State House asked the juvenile court to consult stakeholders before transferring valuable services and to consider that the transfer of jurisdiction would create an access to justice issue that would disproportionately affect Black and Brown youth.

"I am gratified that my work with DA Michael Morrissey, Senator Creem, and the rest of the Brookline delegation persuaded the judicial branch of the importance of continuing to hear juvenile cases in the Brookline District Court, where local youth can be supported in-person by social workers, teachers, police officers, and other advocates," said Representative Tommy Vitolo.

"Maintaining juvenile court jurisdiction in Brookline promotes access to justice and ensures that youthful offenders will continue to benefit from the dense network of social service organizations that are connected to the Brookline District Court," said State Senator Cynthia Creem. "I'm grateful to DA Morrissey and the rest of the Brookline delegation for their advocacy, and I thank Chief Justices Amy Netchem and Paul Dawley for listening to our concerns and reaching a solution that works for both the court system and the Brookline community."

On Thursday morning, the trial court sent a letter to stakeholders agreeing to the joint proposal of the District Attorney and the Brookline delegation that cases will still be heard in Brookline on certain days. At other times, enhanced technology will be used to allow virtual contact with juvenile judges.

After hearing about the decision, Brookline Select Board member Bernard Greene explained that "the beneficiaries of the court's decision need accessible services and support. I want to thank District Attorney Morrissey, Brookline's state legislative delegation, and the Brookline community, including Brookline PAX, who argued that moving juvenile cases to Dedham would hurt troubled youth, especially Black, Brown and low-income youth from Brookline and surrounding Boston communities."

Brookline PAX was instrumental in emphasizing the "huge racial, social, and economic justice inequities and injustices that would have resulted from moving the juvenile court cases 8 miles to Dedham which lacks, almost any, let alone easy, public transportation," Greene explained.

In the next several days, the judicial branch will work to implement the joint proposal that will allow for virtual contact with juvenile judges and provide for the return of the juvenile court to Brookline.