



Empty juvenile center to stay open

by amy zimmer / metro new york
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NEW YORK. The Auburn Residential Center, a juvenile justice facility near Syracuse, has 24 employees, 24 beds and zero young people being detained there.

Auburn was one of six empty or nearly empty youth detention centers slated to be closed by the state's Office of Children and Family Services. But this week the state senate voted to make it impossible to close Auburn and two other facilities on the list.

Advocates campaigning to close the centers estimate it costs taxpayers \$140,000 to \$200,000 per empty bed, which means Auburn may be costing up to \$4.8 million a year.

The New York State Public Employees Federation is fighting hard to keep the facilities open, saying the demand is cyclical and that recent evidence points to an increase of juvenile crime.

But Mishi Faruqee, director of the Correctional Association's Juvenile Justice Project, a nonprofit watchdog, said, "It's such a clear issue with a \$4.5 billion deficit that the state can't keep an empty facility open for the sake of 24 jobs."

Rather than sending city kids upstate, Faruqee's group wants money spent on community-based programs here.

Recidivism

According to state figures, more than three quarters of kids who enter the juvenile justice system are re-arrested within three years of their release.