

Teens demand reform in juvenile justice system, education, eviction, and jobs



JOHN TLUMAC



US Representative Ayanna Pressley spoke to the marchers at the Boston Common bandstand Thursday.

By Ysabelle Kempe

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They also advocated to seal eviction records that include the names of minors and raise the age limit on those treated as juveniles in the justice system from 18 to 21.

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The crowd ranged in age from 14 to mid-20s and came from Boston and communities including Chelsea, Revere, and Worcester. They were mostly members of the group that sponsored the rally, I Have a Future, a statewide organization working to provide equal opportunities to all young people.

The event began like a high school pep rally, with music blasting from a speaker and teenagers dancing and laughing, but as politicians spoke, the mood sobered and it was clear the crowd was focused on policy change.

“The reason we are out here is because the government isn’t listening to us” said Chairman Hossaini, a senior at Pioneer



because we are teenage rebels or because we are trying to get attention. We do it for a cause.”

I Have a Future is pushing for state funding of \$15 million toward YouthWorks, a youth employment program. Funding for the program has plateaued in recent years, causing a loss of almost 1,000 youth jobs, according to the group. They also want \$5.5 million to go toward School-to-Career Connecting Activities, an initiative from the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

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Pressley told the audience that her family’s rent would not have been paid if she had not had a job at age 14. Rollins promised the youths she would focus on creating internships in her own district attorney office.

“Kids want to start working, not just for themselves, but for their family,” said Dante Kubicki, a sophomore at Doherty Memorial High School in Worcester. He said he started working when he was 14 and used the money to pay for basketball expenses, get a phone, and buy clothes for school.

Attendees also supported the Education PROMISE Act, which would change the school funding formula to give more money to low-income students.

Getting funding “makes them feel like it’s not a rundown city, like they’re not excluded” said Kubicki. “It gives hope.”

Many at the rally said they live in lower-income neighborhoods that are heavily affected by gentrification. They supported the HOMES bill, also known as SD.526, which would remove eviction notices from the public records of minors.

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