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ADVANCE SHEET HEADNOTE
November 23, 2026

2026 CO 71

No. 26SA107, *People v. Rodriguez Estrada*—Juvenile Justice System—Direct Filing.

In this original proceeding, the supreme court considers the meaning of the phrase a "prior adjudicated felony offense" in section 19-2.5-801(1)(c)(II), C.R.S. (2026) ("subsection 19-2.5-801(1)(c)(II)"), the provision of the Children' Code that authorizes the direct filing of charges against juveniles, as if they were adults, in district court. The court now concludes that subsection (1)(c)(II) of the direct filing statute does not allow the People to direct file charges against a juvenile unless the juvenile was adjudicated for a felony offense prior to the commission of the alleged offense charged in the direct filing. § 19-2.5-801(1)(c)(II). Accordingly, the court makes the order to show cause absolute and remands this case to the district court for further proceedings consistent with this opinion.

The Supreme Court of the State of Colorado
2 East 14th Avenue • Denver, Colorado 80203

2026 CO 71

Supreme Court Case No. 26SA107
Original Proceeding Pursuant to C.A.R. 21
El Paso County District Court Case No. 25CR4083
Honorable Diana K. May, Judge

In Re
Plaintiff:

The People of the State of Colorado,

v.

Defendant:

Jose Antonio Rodriguez Estrada.

Order Made Absolute
en banc
November 23, 2026

Attorneys for Plaintiff:
Michael J. Allen, District Attorney, Fourth Judicial District
Tanya A. Karimi, Deputy District Attorney
Jacqueline Markwood, Deputy District Attorney
Colorado Springs, Colorado

Attorneys for Defendant:
Megan A. Ring, Public Defender
Rachel B. Armstrong, Deputy Public Defender
Colorado Springs, Colorado

JUSTICE BERKENKOTTER delivered the Opinion of the Court, in which **CHIEF JUSTICE MÁRQUEZ**, **JUSTICE BOATRIGHT**, **JUSTICE HOOD, JUSTICE GABRIEL, JUSTICE SAMOUR, AND JUSTICE BLANCO** joined.

JUSTICE BERKENKOTTER delivered the Opinion of the Court.

¶1 This original proceeding requires us to consider the meaning of the phrase "a prior adjudicated felony offense" in section 19-2.5-801(1)(c)(II), C.R.S. (2026) ("subsection (1)(c)(II)"), the provision of the Children's Code that authorizes the direct filing of charges against juveniles, as if they were adults, in district court.

¶2 Jose Antonio Rodriguez Estrada had no prior adjudicated felony offenses at the time he, as a seventeen-year-old, allegedly *committed* the offenses charged in this case. But, by the time he was *charged* with those alleged offenses eighteen months later, he had three prior adjudicated felony offenses entered in other cases.

¶3 After the El Paso County District Attorney's Office direct filed charges against him, Rodriguez Estrada filed a motion asking the district court to dismiss the charges for lack of subject matter jurisdiction. He argued that the word "prior" in the phrase "a prior adjudicated felony offense" meant a felony adjudication entered before the commission of the offense alleged in the direct filing. § 19-2.5-801(1)(c)(II). And because he had no felony adjudication before the offenses the People alleged he committed, the charges against him had to be dismissed.

¶4 The district court denied Rodriguez Estrada's motion, meaning that the People could prosecute the case against him as an adult. He petitioned this court to exercise its original jurisdiction under C.A.R. 21.

¶5 We accepted jurisdiction to determine whether the district court correctly interpreted subsection (1)(c)(II). We now hold that subsection (1)(c)(II) of the direct filing statute does not allow the People to direct file charges against a juvenile unless the juvenile was adjudicated for a felony offense prior to the *commission* of the alleged offense charged in the direct filing. § 19-2.5-801(1)(c)(II). Accordingly, we make the order to show cause absolute, reverse the district court's order, and remand this case to the district court for further proceedings consistent with this opinion.

I. Facts and Procedural History

¶6 On February 28, 2024, when he was seventeen years old, Rodriguez Estrada allegedly committed several offenses. Almost eighteen months later, on August 18, 2025, the prosecution filed a juvenile petition against him based on those alleged offenses. Less than a month later, the People changed course and direct filed a complaint and information in the district court based on the same allegations, charging Rodriguez Estrada with criminal attempt to commit aggravated robbery (a class 4 felony); a crime of violence (a sentence enhancer); and possession of a handgun by a juvenile (a class 2 misdemeanor).

¶7 Rodriguez Estrada's juvenile history showed that three separate juvenile adjudications had been entered against him more than a year before, on August 5,

2024: second degree assault (a class 4 felony); aggravated robbery (a class 3 felony); and possession of a handgun by a juvenile (a misdemeanor).

¶8 Rodriguez Estrada subsequently filed a motion to dismiss the case before the district court for lack of subject matter jurisdiction. He argued that the direct filing statute, § 19-2.5-801, unambiguously prohibits the prosecution from the direct filing of charges unless the juvenile already has a prior felony adjudication at the time of the offense alleged in the direct filing. And at the time of the commission of the alleged offense in February 2024, he emphasized, he had no felony adjudications. He reasoned that his case was ineligible to be direct filed and, therefore, the district court lacked subject matter jurisdiction. The People responded that Rodriguez Estrada's case was eligible for direct filing because they did not direct file the complaint until more than a year after the three earlier adjudications had been entered.

¶9 The district court thus had to decide whether "a prior adjudicated felony offense" under subsection (1)(c)(II) means prior to the commission of the offense alleged in the direct filing or prior to the direct filing of charges. It determined that the direct filing statute referred to the latter circumstance and denied the motion to dismiss. While the court acknowledged that subsection (1)(c)(II) is "susceptible [to] the interpretation argued by [Rodriguez Estrada]," it concluded that the text of the statute weighed in favor of the People's interpretation.

Specifically, it was persuaded by the contrast between section 19-2.5-801(1), which provides that a juvenile may be charged by the direct filing of an information in the district court if the juvenile is at least sixteen years old "at the time of the commission of the alleged offense," and subsection (1)(c)(II), which includes no such textual limitation. *See* § 19-2.5-801(1)(c)(II). After additionally observing that a purpose of the Children's Code and the juvenile justice system is to "appropriately sanction juveniles who violate the law," § 19-2.5-101(1)(a), C.R.S. (2026), the court denied Rodriguez Estrada's motion to dismiss.

¶10 Rodriguez Estrada sought review of the district court's order under Rule 21, arguing that the court misinterpreted the direct filing statute and the ordinary appellate process would be inadequate. We issued an order to show cause.

II. Jurisdiction

¶11 Original proceedings under Rule 21 are within the sound discretion of this court. C.A.R. 21(a)(2). Such relief may be granted when the "petition raises 'issues of significant public importance that we have not yet considered.'" *People v. Bell*, 2026 CO 28, ¶ 9, 589 P.3d 465, 468 (quoting *People v. Silva-Jaquez*, 2025 CO 11, ¶ 11, 564 P.3d 650, 653); *see also People v. Manaois*, 2021 CO 49, ¶ 18, 488 P.3d 1099, 1105 (exercising Rule 21 jurisdiction when "waiting to act would foster uncertainty and do a disservice to our district courts and the court of appeals, not to mention Coloradans in general").

¶12 Rodriguez Estrada's petition raises a question of significant public importance concerning when a sixteen- or seventeen-year-old may be charged as an adult under subsection (1)(c)(II). Ordinarily, juvenile courts exercise exclusive jurisdiction over proceedings brought against juveniles ten years of age or older. § 19-2.5-103(1)(a), C.R.S. (2026). However, when the direct filing statute applies, juvenile courts have limited jurisdiction, § 19-2.5-103(2), and the case may be filed by a district attorney directly in the district court, § 19-2.5-801(1). The issue of whether subsection (1)(c)(II) applies in this case thus determines whether the district court had jurisdiction over Rodriguez Estrada's proceedings. *See People v. Sandoval*, 2016 COA 57, ¶ 47, 383 P.3d 92, 101 ("Lack of subject matter jurisdiction . . . requires dismissal.").

¶13 Like other issues we have addressed when we have accepted jurisdiction in a Rule 21 proceeding involving the juvenile justice system, this "appears to be an issue that is mired in confusion and that is likely to recur." *In re People in Int. of A.T.C.*, 2023 CO 19, ¶ 11, 528 P.3d 168, 171 (citing *In re People in Int. of B.B.A.M.*, 2019 CO 103, ¶ 22, 453 P.3d 1161, 1166). Moreover, the resolution of this issue has meaningful consequences for juvenile defendants. When a case is direct filed, the alleged offender is deprived of the benefits of the rehabilitative services provided by the juvenile justice system and instead must face the potentially "severe

consequences" of the more punitive adult criminal justice system. *Bostelman v. People*, 162 P.3d 686, 691–92 (Colo. 2007).

¶14 For example, the juvenile justice system limits the use of detention, § 19-2.5-301, C.R.S. (2026), and requires courts in juvenile sentencing to consider the best interests of the juvenile, § 19-2.5-1102(1)(a), C.R.S. (2026). A juvenile facing the adult criminal justice system through the direct filing statute does not reap the benefit of these protections. Determining when said statute applies will "advance the public's interest in the uniform administration of justice." *Bell*, ¶ 10, 589 P.3d at 468.

III. Analysis

¶15 We begin by identifying the standard of review and applicable principles of statutory interpretation. After determining that subsection (1)(c)(II) is ambiguous, we assess legislative history, statutory purpose, pertinent case law, the ordinary structure of recidivism statutes, and the possible consequences of the interpretations offered by the parties. From this analysis, we conclude that the word "prior" in subsection (1)(c)(II) means a felony adjudication entered before the *commission* of the offense alleged in the direct filing. § 19-2.5-801(1)(c)(II).

A. Standard of Review and Principles of Statutory Interpretation

¶16 This case presents an issue of statutory interpretation. "We review issues of statutory interpretation de novo." *McCoy v. People*, 2019 CO 44, ¶ 37, 442 P.3d 379,

389. When interpreting statutes, our primary obligation is to give effect to the General Assembly's intent. *Id.* This court ascertains and gives effect to the General Assembly's intent by giving "words and phrases their ordinary meanings" and reading the legislative scheme "as a whole, giving consistent, harmonious, and sensible effect to all of its parts." *Id.* at ¶¶ 37–38, 442 P.3d at 389.

¶17 When a statute is unambiguous, our analysis ends there, without recourse to other aids of statutory interpretation. *Id.* at ¶ 38, 442 P.3d at 389. Conversely, where the language is ambiguous, we may use those additional tools, including the statute's legislative history, the purpose of the statute, and the consequences of a particular interpretation. *Id.* "A statute is ambiguous if it is susceptible to multiple reasonable interpretations." *Carrera v. People*, 2019 CO 83, ¶ 18, 449 P.3d 725, 729.

B. Is Subsection (1)(c)(II) Ambiguous?

¶18 The direct filing statute allows for direct filing against a juvenile who is at least sixteen years old under certain circumstances. § 19-2.5-801(1).

> (1) A juvenile may be charged by the direct filing of an information in the district court or by indictment only if the juvenile is sixteen years of age or older at the time of the commission of the alleged offense and:
>
> (a) Is alleged to have committed a class 1 or class 2 felony; or
>
> (b) Is alleged to have committed a sexual assault that is a crime of violence pursuant to section 18-1.3-406 or a sexual assault

> under the circumstances described in section 18-3-402(5)(a); or
>
> (c) (I) Is alleged to have committed a felony enumerated as a crime of violence pursuant to section 18-1.3-406, other than a sexual assault as described in subsection (1)(b) of this section, or is alleged to have committed sexual assault pursuant to section 18-3-402, sexual assault on a child pursuant to section 18-3-405, or sexual assault on a child by one in a position of trust pursuant to section 18-3-504.3; and
>
> (II) Is found to have a prior adjudicated felony offense . . . .

Id.

¶19 Section 19-2.5-801(1)(c) allows for direct filing against juveniles sixteen years of age or older who have allegedly committed an enumerated crime so long as they are "found to have a prior adjudicated felony offense." The statute does not explain what the term "prior" means. Is it prior to the commission of the offense charged in the direct filing or prior to the time those charges are direct filed? As this case illustrates, it's a distinction with significant consequences.

¶20 The People contend that the statute is unambiguous. They begin their analysis with the statute's threshold requirement that a juvenile may only be charged by the direct filing of an information in the district court if the juvenile is "sixteen years of age or older *at the time of the commission of the alleged offense*." § 19-2.5-801(1) (emphasis added). This language, they contend, shows a conscious choice by the General Assembly to anchor the age provision of the direct filing statute to a juvenile's age at the time of the commission of an alleged offense.

According to the People, this language demonstrates that the General Assembly knows how to limit the reach of the direct filing statute to the time of the offense alleged in the direct filing. That language, they emphasize, is not present in the rest of the direct filing statute.

¶21 Although Rodriguez Estrada agrees that the statute is unambiguous, he takes a different view. He posits that the phrase "a prior adjudicated felony offense" in subsection (1)(c)(II) means an adjudication entered prior to the *commission* of the crime alleged in the direct filing. His primary textual support for this proposition is that each of the other elements in section 19-2.5-801(1)—the age minimum and the nature of the alleged offense requirement—relate to the time of offense, not the time of filing.

¶22 Thus, in Rodriguez Estrada's view, the prior felony adjudication requirement must be applied consistently with the other elements in section 19-2.5-801(1) when considered as a whole. He also argues that the conjunctive "and" between the nature of the alleged offense requirement and the requirement that the juvenile be "found to have a prior adjudicated felony offense," indicates that the requirements should operate in the same way. § 19-2.5-801(1)(c). Moreover, because the nature of the alleged offense requirement relates to the time of commission, Rodriguez Estrada argues the conjunctive "and" indicates "prior" must also relate to the time of commission. *Id.*

¶23 Notably, each party would have us reject the other's interpretation of the direct filing statute as unreasonable and hold that the statute unambiguously supports their reading. We decline to do so. While both readings are reasonable in some respects, neither interpretation of subsection (1)(c)(II) is so clearly supported by the plain text of the statute as to rule out the other. As such, we conclude that subsection (1)(c)(II) is ambiguous, requiring us to apply additional tools of statutory interpretation.

C. Under Subsection (1)(c)(II), a Juvenile's Case Is Not Eligible for Direct Filing in District Court Without a Prior Felony Adjudication at the Time of the Offense Alleged in the Direct Filing

¶24 Rodriguez Estrada alternatively argues that—in the event we conclude that the plain text of the direct filing statute is ambiguous—the legislative history, statutory purpose, pertinent case law, ordinary structure of recidivism statutes, and the possible consequences of the proposed interpretations all support his position. *See McCoy*, ¶ 38, 442 P.3d at 389 (discussing supplementary tools of interpretation available when the statutory text is ambiguous). We consider each of these contentions in turn below.

1. Legislative History

¶25 In 2012, the General Assembly revised the direct filing statute and, among other things, limited the types of offenses that qualified for direct filing. Ch. 128, sec. 1, § 19-2-517(1), 2012 Colo. Sess. Laws 439, 439–45. This narrowing effect was

not accidental. A sponsor of the bill explicitly noted that it "limits direct file," in response to a perceived departure from the statute's original intent to enable direct filing of the "most heinous crimes." Hearing on H.B. 1271 before the H. Judiciary Comm., 68th Gen. Assemb., 2d Sess. (Mar. 8, 2012) (statements of Rep. Nikkel). Another sponsor explained that the amendments were meant to limit direct filing against juveniles "who have not been through the youthful [offender] system yet." *Id.* (statements of Rep. McCann).

¶26 Opponents of the 2012 amendments understood their narrowing effect as well. For example, a district attorney protested that the amendments would prevent direct filings against sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds who commit robbery "unless . . . the juvenile had previously been adjudicated a felon." Hearing on H.B. 1271 before the S. Judiciary Comm., 68th Gen. Assemb., 2d Sess. (Mar. 26, 2012) (statements of Mitch Morrissey). The amendments nonetheless passed.

¶27 This legislative history demonstrates the General Assembly's intent to narrow the cases in which juveniles may be charged as adults to sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds who are alleged to have committed (1) class 1 or 2 felonies or certain sexual assaults; or (2) certain specifically enumerated felony crimes of violence or certain other types of sexual assaults if they have a prior adjudicated felony offense.

¶28 The General Assembly's 2012 amendments support the interpretation that "a prior adjudicated felony offense" must have been entered before the commission of the offense charged in the direct filing. § 19-2.5-801(1)(c)(II).

2. Statutory Purpose

¶29 To effectuate the intent of the legislature, this court considers the purposes of the statute. *Bostelman*, 162 P.3d at 689–90. We interpret the Children's Code, which includes the direct filing statute, "liberally[,] in order to accomplish the purpose of the Code and to effectuate the legislature's intent." *Id.* at 690 (citing *C.S. v. People*, 83 P.3d 627, 635 (Colo. 2004)). We avoid technical readings "that would disregard the child's best interest and the legislature's intent." *Id.*

¶30 The General Assembly has made explicit the purpose of the juvenile justice system:

> (a) The general assembly finds that the intent of this article 2.5 is to protect, restore, and improve the public safety by creating a system of juvenile justice that will appropriately sanction juveniles who violate the law and, in certain cases, will also provide the opportunity to bring together affected victims, the community, and juvenile offenders for restorative purposes.
>
> (b) The general assembly further finds that . . . the juvenile justice system must take into consideration the best interests of the juvenile, the victim, and the community in providing appropriate treatment to reduce the rate of recidivism in the juvenile justice system and to assist the juvenile in becoming a productive member of society.

§ 19-2.5-101(1).

¶31 To that end, although a purpose of the juvenile justice system is to keep the community safe, it also serves the purpose of supporting the juvenile in their efforts to become a "productive member of society." § 19-2.5-101(1)(b); *see also A.S. v. People*, 2013 CO 63, ¶ 14, 312 P.3d 168, 172 ("The juvenile justice system aims to provide guidance, rehabilitation, and restoration for the juvenile and to protect society, rather than focusing principally on criminal conduct and assigning criminal responsibility, guilt, and punishment."). We previously described the purpose of the juvenile justice system as "differ[ing] fundamentally from the adult [criminal] justice system," noting that the legislature consciously limited juvenile exposure to the adult criminal justice system due to the potential "severe consequences" for juveniles. *Bostelman*, 162 P.3d at 692.

¶32 Interpreting the statute in the manner the People urge would undoubtedly result in a greater number of juveniles facing prosecution and sentencing as adults. This interpretation would also allow for the direct filing of charges, other than for the most serious crimes, against a juvenile who never had access to the rehabilitative services provided by the juvenile justice system. But interpreting the statute in this manner does little to balance the Children's Code's dual goals of deterrence and rehabilitation. The better understanding of subsection (1)(c)(II) is that it allows juveniles to be subjected to the adult criminal justice system only if the offense alleged in the direct filing occurred *after* a felony adjudication entered.

That is, a sixteen- or seventeen-year-old accused of one of the specific crimes identified in section 19-2.5-801(1)(c)(I) would have the opportunity, exercised or not, to benefit from the juvenile justice system's rehabilitative services before being eligible to be charged as an adult.

¶33 Accordingly, we conclude that the statutory purpose of the direct filing statute weighs in favor of interpreting "a prior adjudicated felony offense" to mean before the commission of the offense alleged in the direct filing. § 19-2.5-801(1)(c)(II).

3. Relevant Case Law

¶34 This is our first occasion to interpret subsection (1)(c)(II). Two of our prior opinions are nonetheless relevant and add weight to our interpretation.

¶35 First, in *Howard v. People*, 2020 CO 15, ¶¶ 1–4, 458 P.3d 893, 894–95, we addressed whether the direct filing statute violated a juvenile's equal protection rights. While *Howard* addressed a different question than the one before us now, we explained there that "*[a]t the time of the offense*, [the juvenile] did not have any prior felony adjudications or convictions" and thus was not eligible for direct filing. *Id.* at ¶ 20, 458 P.3d at 898 (emphasis added). Though dicta, *Howard* is instructive insofar as it reveals how this court has previously understood subsection (1)(c)(II) to operate.

¶36 Second, in *Bostelman*, this court "determine[d] whether the direct filing statute authorizes the prosecution to file charges in district court based on the juvenile's age at the time the delinquent act is charged, rather than the juvenile's age when the delinquent act occurred." 162 P.3d at 687.[1]

¶37 Having compared the differing purposes of the juvenile justice system and the adult criminal justice system in *Bostelman*, we concluded that the legislature imposed an age minimum for direct filing to allow "exposure to the criminal punishment system . . . only when the person is mature enough . . . to consider the penal consequences of committing the delinquent act." 162 P.3d at 692. Thus, we determined that the age requirement had to be met at the time of commission, even though such a requirement was at that time not specified in the text of the statute. *Id.*; *see also* § 19-2-517(1)(a)(IV), C.R.S. (2005), repealed, amended, and relocated to § 19-2.5-801, C.R.S. (2021), effective Oct. 1, 2021.

¶38 *Bostelman*'s reasoning makes sense here too. The General Assembly's goal of limiting a juvenile's exposure to the adult criminal justice system is fulfilled by

[1] At the time *Bostelman* was announced, the direct filing statute did not include the phrase "at the time of the commission of the alleged offense," along with the age minimum; instead it merely stated, "The juvenile is fourteen years of age or older." § 19-2-517(1)(a)(IV), C.R.S. (2005), repealed, amended, and relocated to § 19-2.5-801, C.R.S. (2021), effective Oct. 1, 2021.

interpreting the word "prior" to mean a felony adjudication entered before the commission of the felony charged in the direct filing. § 19-2.5-801(1)(c)(II).

¶39 Further, *Bostelman* does much to refute the People's argument that we should find the lack of an explicit modifier next to the prior felony adjudication requirement meaningful, even given the presence of such a modifier next to the age minimum in section 19-2.5-801(1). In *Bostelman*, we acknowledged that the General Assembly had amended the provision to add such a modifier to the age minimum,[2] and concluded that the amendment to the direct filing statute did not change its meaning. 162 P.3d at 692–93 (determining that, even before the explicit addition of "at the time of the commission of the alleged offense," the statute only authorized prosecution if the age requirement was met at the time of commission (emphasis omitted)).

¶40 As illuminated by *Howard* and *Bostelman*, though not directly on point, we conclude that the relevant case law also weighs in favor of interpreting subsection (1)(c)(II) as requiring the entry of a felony adjudication before the commission of the offense alleged in the direct filing. § 19-2.5-801(1)(c)(II).

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[2] After the beginning of the underlying litigation but by the time the court decided *Bostelman*, the direct filing statute provision at-issue read: "A juvenile may be charged by . . . direct filing . . . only when . . . [t]he juvenile is fourteen years of age or older at the time of the commission of the alleged offense . . . ." § 19-2-517(1)(a)(IV), C.R.S. (2006), repealed, amended, and relocated to § 19-2.5-801, C.R.S. (2021), effective Oct. 1, 2021.

4. The Ordinary Structure of Recidivism Statutes

¶41 Another way courts may ascertain the General Assembly's intent is by comparing the statute at issue with statutes that have the same purpose or regard the same subject. *See Kuhn v. Williams*, 2018 CO 30M, ¶ 49, 418 P.3d 478, 487 (citing *R.E.N. v. City of Colo. Springs*, 823 P.2d 1359, 1364 n.5 (Colo. 1992)). Subsection (1)(c)(II) is a recidivism provision to the extent it allows the People to file charges in district court and thus seek the harsher penalties of the adult criminal justice system when a juvenile has a prior felony adjudication. *See* § 19-2.5-801(1)(c)(II); *see also Caswell v. People*, 2023 CO 50, ¶ 29, 536 P.3d 323, 330 (citing *Parke v. Raley*, 506 U.S. 20, 26 (1992)) (describing recidivist provisions as proscribing "harsher punishment[s]" for recidivists). Accordingly, it is instructive to consider how the General Assembly ordinarily structures recidivism provisions.

¶42 As we explained in *People v. Nees*, 615 P.2d 690, 693 (Colo. 1980), "[t]he general rule is that penalty enhancement statutes for repeat offenders apply only if the presently charged offense was committed after there had been a conviction of any offenses sought to be used as a basis for the penalty enhancement." Further, under "[t]raditional American principles of criminal responsibility," laws do not typically subject individuals to heightened charges or penalties based on conduct which occurred after the charged offense, but rather "subject[] an individual to the

imposition of criminal penalties applicable to the act *at the time it is committed*." *Id.* (emphasis added) (quoting *State v. Neal*, 347 So. 2d 1139, 1141 (La. 1977)).

¶43 We presume that the legislature will clearly indicate when it departs from the established structure for recidivism statutes. *See Kuhn*, ¶ 49, 418 P.3d at 487 (citing *R.E.N.*, 823 P.2d at 1364 n.5). Thus, the absence of any such indication in the direct filing statute weighs in favor of interpreting subsection (1)(c)(II) to allow direct filing only when a felony adjudication has entered prior to the commission of the offense alleged in the direct filing.

5. Potential for Absurd Results

¶44 Our final consideration is the potential consequences of the proposed interpretations. When interpreting a statute, we presume that the General Assembly intended a "just and reasonable result." § 2-4-201, C.R.S. (2026); *see also In re Petition of U.M. v. Dist. Ct.*, 631 P.2d 165, 167 (Colo. 1981) (same). Thus, we "avoid constructions that would . . . lead to illogical or absurd results." *Educ. reEnvisioned BOCES v. Colo. Springs Sch. Dist. 11*, 2024 CO 29, ¶ 32, 548 P.3d 669, 675.

¶45 Rodriguez Estrada argues that the district court's interpretation of subsection (1)(c)(II) could lead to absurd results because it may incentivize the People to intentionally delay a case in order to direct file charges. We discussed this exact concern in *Bostelman*, where we said that shifting the focus "to the

[People]'s timing of filing charges . . . encourages prosecutorial delay in bringing charges and raises the very real possibility that children who commit the same act will be treated substantially differently, depending on which prosecutor brings the charge." 162 P.3d at 692–93. The same reasoning applies here.

¶46 The risk of this potential practice is contrary to the purposes of the juvenile justice system and is an absurd outcome that once again weighs in favor of our interpretation. *See In re Petition of U.M.*, 631 P.2d at 167.

IV. Conclusion

¶47 We agree with the district court that subsection (1)(c)(II) is ambiguous. We hold, however, that the legislative history, statutory purpose, pertinent case law, and ordinary structure of recidivism statutes all point to one interpretation: A juvenile is not eligible for the direct filing of charges under section 19-2.5-801(1)(c)(II) unless the juvenile has a felony adjudication entered before the commission of the offense alleged in the direct filing. To interpret the statute otherwise could also produce absurd results. Accordingly, we make the order to show cause absolute, reverse the district court's order, and remand this case to the district court for further proceedings consistent with this opinion.