



## **HB 725: Raising the Age is the Fiscally Responsible Approach**

We can all agree that raising the age in North Carolina can only be possible by adequately funding the juvenile justice system to facilitate this policy change. However, extensive research concludes that the net benefits of moving 16 and 17-year-olds to the juvenile systems are significantly greater than the costs incurred. The fact remains, that the current law **IS** costing the state money, a burden that falls to taxpayers.

### **NC Will Take a Gradual Approach:**

- Raising the age in North Carolina will be a **gradual** process taking place over a period of **4 years** and closely supervised by and advisory board made up of experts from a number of fields.
- Judicial officials from Connecticut advise that time is essential in order to spread the impact on the budget, address practical concerns, and ensure a smooth implementation of the new policy.

### **Benefits Outweigh the Costs Over Time:**

- In 2011, the VERA Institute for Justice estimated that raising the age of juvenile jurisdiction from 16 to 18 for alleged misdemeanants and low-level felons will generate **\$52.3 million in net benefits**<sup>1</sup>, per annual cohort of youth aged 16 and 17, from the combined perspectives of taxpayers, victims, and youth. (**NOTE: H.B. 725 only affects 16-18 year olds who have committed misdemeanors.**)
- North Carolina will recover untold millions as a result of the improved job opportunities for the thousands of 16 and 17-year-old misdemeanants without an adult criminal record. These youths are therefore able to **earn more** and **contribute further** to the state economy over their lifetime.

### **The Adult System Leads to Worse Financial and Social Outcomes**

- Recidivism rates among 16-and 17-year-olds handled by the adult criminal justice system are **more than twice as high** as those handled by the juvenile justice system.
- Youth who go through the adult system are **re-arrested, re-convicted, re-incarcerated** and have their **probation revoked** at higher rates than other adult offenders.<sup>2</sup>
- The adult system is **not** equipped to provide these minors with the rehabilitative resources that could have kept them from a life of violence and crime - resources commonly provided in the juvenile system where these kids belong.
- North Carolina's juvenile justice system has a proven track record for treating and supervising 16 and 17-year-olds. Placing youths in the juvenile system means **less crime** which means **more public savings**.

<sup>1</sup> Youth Accountability Planning Task Force (YAPTF). *Cost-Benefit Analysis of Raising the Age in NC*. January 2011. Available at: <https://www.ncdps.gov/Index2.cfm?a=000003,002476,002551>

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Task Force on Community Preventive Services. *Effects on Violence of Laws and Policy Facilitating the Transfer of Juveniles from the Juvenile Justice System to the Adult Justice System*. American Journal of Preventive Medicine. April 2007.

### **16 and 17-Year Old Misdemeanants DO End Up in Jail:**<sup>3</sup>

- North Carolina's jails house 16 and 17-year-olds charged with misdemeanors, including those under pre-trial status.
  - Mecklenburg County alone spent \$659,243 in 2012 for 680, 16 and 17-year-olds charged with a misdemeanor and housed on pre-trial status. Those youths were housed for an average of 6.5 days with 20 youths housed with pretrial status at any given time.
  - Similarly, Durham County incurred significant costs in 2012 due to pre-trial holdings with the cost of housing 210, 16 and 17-year-olds totaling \$265,588.64. Those youths were housed for an average of 3.43 days with 7 youths housed with pretrial status at any given time.

**Just these two counties alone total almost \$1 million to house 890, 16 and 17-year-olds who have only been *charged* with a misdemeanor.**

### **Raising the Age Makes \$Dollars and Sense:**

- **48 other states** from Massachusetts to Mississippi have successfully raised the age and implemented this policy change effectively and without significant complications.
- Many states, including Connecticut and Illinois, have found that it isn't all about coming up with NEW dollars, but rather **re-allocating money and realigning the adult and juvenile systems.**<sup>4</sup>
- In fact, Connecticut found that **the actual cost of raising the age was much less than the projected costs.**<sup>5</sup>
- Illinois even found that the size and scope of the juvenile justice system **decreased** after program implementation because of its effectiveness.<sup>6</sup>
- **The Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA)** will require all offenders under 18, even those in the criminal system, to be housed separately from adults in all lockups, jails, detention centers, and prisons. Noncompliance can result in a 5 percent penalty of federal grant funds, which support state and local law enforcement agencies throughout the state.
- Raise the Age is a comprehensive solution to not only the high costs the state would have to face by complying to PREA standards, but also to the unfortunate state of minor offending 16 and 17-year-olds in the adult system.

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<sup>3</sup> National Juvenile Justice Network. Fiscal Policy Center Technical Assistance. *The Cost to Detain 16-and 17-year-olds in NC Jails*. April 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission. *Raising the Age Factsheet*. Available at: <http://ijjc.illinois.gov/publications/raising-age-fact-sheet>

<sup>5</sup> Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance. *Presentation on Raise the Age Implementation*. Available at: <http://www.ctjja.org/issues/rta.html>

<sup>6</sup> Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission. *Raising the Age of Juvenile Jurisdiction Report*. Available at: <http://ijjc.illinois.gov/rta>