



Support for HB 280:
Juvenile Justice Reinvestment Act

North Carolina remains one of only two states that continue to treat 16 and 17 year olds as adults in the criminal justice system – no matter how minor the offense. We all want our children to be accountable for bad decisions, but saddling them with life-long adult criminal records only leads to more expense, crime and victimization for our state.

Support for the Juvenile Justice Reinvestment Act is wide-spread, and includes the NC Sheriffs’ Association, the NC Association of Chiefs of Police, the Police Benevolent Association, the NC Chamber of Commerce, and a diverse coalition of organizations—including the John Locke Foundation, Conservatives for Criminal Justice Reform, the NC Justice Center, NC Child, Disability Rights-NC, the Carolina Justice Policy Center, and the ACLU-NC—to name just a few!

The facts make it clear that it’s time for North Carolina to Raise the Age:

FACT ONE—MORE ACCOUNTABILITY: The juvenile justice system is not only more appropriate for 16 and 17 year olds, but requires far more **accountability** than the adult system. Unlike teens who end up in the adult system, the juvenile system requires frequent contact with court counselors, assessments, rehabilitative services, mental health and substance abuse treatment, counseling and education. It also involves families – our most powerful institution – in keeping young people on the right path.

FACT TWO—MORE EFFECTIVE FOR SCHOOL-BASED OFFENSES: Minor school based offenses can land students in adult court. Each year, **almost half** of the referrals to the juvenile system are for school-based offenses. A schoolyard fight that might have led to after school detention 10 years ago, now often leads to adult charges of assault. Since North Carolina currently sends all 16- and 17-year-olds accused of a crime to the adult system, they receive a permanent adult record that follows them the rest of their lives.

FACT THREE—NC YOUTH WILL BE MORE COMPETITIVE: Raising the age means helping North Carolinians compete: 16- and 17-year olds who commit offenses in 48 other states will not carry these charges into adulthood, while North Carolinians who commit the same offenses at 16- and 17-years-old carry those records for the rest of their lives. That **means teens from North Carolina are at a significant disadvantage to the rest of the nation**, often for jobs or higher education in our own state.

FACT FOUR—APPLIES ONLY TO MISDEMEANORS AND LOW-LEVEL FELONIES: This change **does not** apply to serious felonies; the Juvenile Justice Reinvestment Act **only applies** to young people who commit misdemeanors and lower-level felonies. 97 percent of 16- and 17-year-olds convicted of crimes in North Carolina are convicted of misdemeanors and low-level felonies.

FACT FIVE—COST SAVINGS: Juvenile Reinvestment is **smart on crime, saving our tax payer dollars**. Evidence shows that youth who go through the adult system are more likely to be re-arrested, re-convicted and re-incarcerated down the road, increasing costs to society and taxpayers. When teenagers are thrown into adult prison, they are often victimized or forced to join gangs for protection. Our current system turns teens into repeat offenders as adults.

RAISING THE AGE IS A COMMON SENSE INVESTMENT IN OUR STATE’S YOUTH!