



## Support HB 632/SB 506: Juvenile Age to 18 Raising the Age Makes Good Economic Sense

For North Carolina to be competitive in the increasingly global economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the state will need all the human capital it can foster. Any estimates of the cost of transferring 16- and 17-year-olds into the juvenile justice system from the adult system must consider the long-term cost savings of reducing the number of youth wasted in lives of crime.

### Evidence-Based Juvenile Programs are Highly Cost-Effective

National cost-benefit analyses show that developmentally appropriate intervention in the lives of troubled youth is one of the most cost-effective uses of public money.

- The Washington State Institute for Public Policy performed cost-benefit analyses on over 60 distinct *research-based* prevention and early intervention programs for children and youth in various categories including pre-K, home visitation, juvenile offender programs and others. **The study concluded that effective programs for juvenile offenders have the highest net benefit of any category of program.** Specifically, eight of the 10 most cost-effective programs were for juvenile offenders. Many of these successful programs are used in North Carolina.

High-quality juvenile justice programs show such high public returns because they literally save lives – lives that would have otherwise been wasted in crime or ended prematurely.

- Crime costs the state untold millions in lost productivity, losses to victims, incarceration costs and more.
- Programs that successfully place wayward youth on a path to becoming responsible, contributing adults return those millions to the public coffers.

### Raising the Age Means Big Savings in the Longer Term

The data show that youth handled in the juvenile justice system recidivate far less than youth dealt with in the adult system.<sup>1</sup> Less crime means more public savings, higher state GDP and more tax revenue for the state.

An expert cost-benefit analysis performed for the state of Connecticut as they contemplated moving their 16- and 17-year-olds into the juvenile system concluded that:

- Excluding costs for new juvenile detention construction, raising the age returned \$3 in benefit for every \$1 spent.
- Even including those construction costs, the return was about \$1 for every \$1 spent.

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<sup>1</sup> NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission in conjunction with the N.C. Department of Corrections. (2006) "Correctional Program Evaluation: Fiscal Year 2001/02."