



Support HB 632/SB 506 to Raise the Age for Youth Accused of Minor Offenses: Get it Right the First Time so we Don't Pay Twice for Minor Crime

North Carolina is one of only two states that continue to prosecute all 16- and 17-year-olds as adults in the criminal justice system, with no exceptions. Evidence shows that youth who go through the adult system are more likely to commit further crimes down the road than those who don't, increasing costs to society and taxpayers. Instead of paying twice, let's get it right the first time by keeping 16- and 17-year-olds who commit minor crimes in the juvenile system where they belong. Placing these youth appropriately in the juvenile system improves public safety, reduces costs in the long run, and eliminates unnecessary roadblocks to life success in the paths of youth who are rehabilitated.

Most Crimes Committed by Youth are Minor

Ninety-four percent (94%) of 16- and 17-year-olds arrested in the adult system are accused of non-violent crimes.¹

- 79 percent are accused of misdemeanors.
- 18 percent are accused of low-level felonies (class F-I).
- Only 3 percent are accused of serious felonies (class A-E).

Legislative Task Force Recommends Juvenile System for Most Youth

The Youth Accountability Task Force, a body of legislators and experts who have been studying the issue of raising the age of juvenile court jurisdiction for 18 months, recommends that the three percent of **youth accused of serious felonies continue** to be processed **in the adult system**, per current law.

But the Task Force has recommended that **the other 97 percent of youth** – those accused of misdemeanors and low-level felonies – **stay in the juvenile justice system**.

Juvenile System Improves Public Safety, Reduces Cost in the Long Run

Because of the minor crimes they commit, most youth in the adult system receive probation only, which lacks the supports found in the juvenile justice system and leaves youth largely unsupervised and without the resources to become productive citizens as they mature. On the other hand, the juvenile system requires parental involvement in the process and requires that youth participate in relevant mentoring, tutoring, mental health and substance abuse treatment, education, counseling and restitution —all of which are proven methods to help put youth back on the right path.

In North Carolina, **youth** who serve time **in adult prisons are** more than **twice as likely to be reconvicted** later of other crimes **as youth** who are punished and rehabilitated **in the juvenile system**.²

We can keep paying for the costs of crime, or we can invest in our youth and get it right the first time.

¹ State Bureau of Investigation 2007/08 Arrest Data and NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, 2007/08 Preliminary Youthful Accountability Planning Task Force Data.

² NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission in conjunction with the N.C. Department of Corrections, "Correctional Program Evaluation: Fiscal Year 2001/02." 2006.