



## Support HB 632/SB 506: Juvenile Age to 18 Most Youth are First-Time Offenders

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 more crime down the road, as permanent adult criminal records limit their opportunities.<sup>1</sup> Handling youth who commit minor crimes in the juvenile system improves public safety and eliminates unnecessary roadblocks to life success in the path of youth who are rehabilitated.

### Most Youth Are First-Time Offenders

- In FY 2009/10 there were **10,134** youths convicted in adult court for offenses committed while they were aged 16-17.
- Of these, 1,890 were convicted of a felony and 8,244 were convicted of a misdemeanor.
- **Sixty-seven percent** of the 10,134 youths had no prior convictions of any kind (*i.e.*, "0" prior record points); an additional **21%** or 2,106 youths had one prior conviction (*i.e.*, "1" prior record point, most commonly for a misdemeanor).
- **Overall, 88% of the 10,134 youth had either no prior criminal record or only a minor one.**<sup>2</sup>

### HB 632/SB 506 Handles Repeat Offenders

- Judges retain discretion to transfer any youth age 13 or over accused of any felony to adult court.
- Once a juvenile is transferred to the jurisdiction of the adult court, any future criminal processing of that juvenile will also take place in adult court.
- Any juvenile aged 16-17 who had already been convicted as an adult under current law and will come under juvenile jurisdiction with the proposed new law, will also be processed in adult court (this scenario, by definition, will be limited to the transition period of phasing in the bill).

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<sup>1</sup> In NC, youth who serve adult time are more than twice as likely to be reconvicted of crimes as youth who are punished and rehabilitated in the juvenile system. Source: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission in conjunction with the N.C. Department of Corrections, "Correctional Program Evaluation: Fiscal Year 2001/02." 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Data request 5/5/2011. North Carolina Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission.