



## **Support HB 632/SB 506: Juvenile Age to 18 Juvenile Justice System Creates Safer, Stronger Communities**

Adolescents handled in the juvenile justice system – with its treatment programs, rehabilitative services, and developmentally appropriate punishment – are more likely to grow up to be law-abiding, productive citizens than those warehoused in the adult system.

### **Putting Youth in the Adult System DOES NOT Increase Public Safety**

The adult system is typically thought of as punishment-oriented. However, because of the minor crimes they commit, **86 percent of 16- and 17-year-olds in the adult system receive probation,**<sup>1</sup> which means inconsistent treatment or rehabilitative services, minimal community restitution and little contact with probation officers.

### **Research demonstrates the failure of the adult system to give youth the structure they need to grow into productive citizens.**

- Youth who go through the adult system are re-arrested, reconvicted, re-incarcerated and have their probation revoked at higher rates than other adult offenders.<sup>2</sup>
- 16- and 17-year-old offenders sentenced either to adult probation or adult prison have higher re-arrest rates than all youthful offenders ages 13 to 21.<sup>3</sup>
- **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.**<sup>4</sup>

### **The Juvenile Justice System is the Best System to Handle MOST Youth**

The adult system is not structured to handle the developmental needs of children. That is the job of the juvenile system, with its treatment programs, rehabilitative services, and developmentally appropriate punishment.

And data show it is working. As developmentally appropriate, research-based services have been ramped up in North Carolina over the last decade, **the state crime rate for juveniles age 15 and younger has plummeted, reaching a 10-year low in 2009.**

The premise of the juvenile justice system is that many adolescents can be reformed and rehabilitated while being held accountable for their alleged crimes. Current brain research tells us that this is as true for 16- and 17-year-olds as it is for 14- and 15-year-olds. The juvenile justice system, with its rehabilitative model, provides programs and services that can help youth and families address delinquent behavior and set adolescents on the right track to becoming productive citizens.

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<sup>1</sup> N.C. Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2007/08 Preliminary Youthful Accountability Planning Task Force Data, based on data provided by the Administrative Office of the Courts

<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).

<sup>3</sup> North Carolina Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission. Report on Study of Youthful Offenders Pursuant to Session Law 2006-248, Sections 34.1 and 34.2. March 2007.

<sup>4</sup> NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission in conjunction with the N.C. Department of Corrections, "Correctional Program Evaluation: Fiscal Year 2001/02." 2006.