STOP AUTOMATICALLY PROSECUTING 17-YEAR-OLDS AS ADULTS

Current System is Harmful & Out of Step with National Standards

TEXAS IS JUST 1 OF 7 states that automatically sends 17-year-olds into the adult, rather than juvenile, criminal justice system when accused of a crime.

Parents aren’t required to be informed when 17-year-olds are arrested, leaving their children to fend for themselves.

Youth sent to adult jails are more likely to be victims of sexual assault, suffer from mental illness and commit suicide.¹

Having an adult criminal record creates barriers to education, employment, housing and military service.²

This practice is out of step with societal consensus on maturity: 17-year-olds can’t vote, serve on juries or join the military but are treated as adults by the criminal justice system.

Raising the Age WON’T Threaten Public Safety³

17-year-olds statewide are most often arrested for drug offenses.

75.5% of drug offense arrests are for small amounts of marijuana possession.

Houston area: This makes up 35.9% of school district police-based arrests of 17-year-olds.

2015: 95% of 17-year-olds arrested in Texas had committed nonviolent and misdemeanor offenses.

Raising the Age WILL Prevent Crime

Nationally, youth kept in adult jails are 34% more likely to be re-arrested for violent or other crimes than youth retained in the juvenile court system.⁴

Greater emphasis on research-based youth rehabilitation led to a 26% drop in arrest rates for Texas 16-year-olds from 2013-2015.⁵

Raising the Age will likely produce similar results for 17-year-olds.

raisetheagetx.org
Despite similar behavior, 17-year-olds are jailed more often than 16-year-olds are detained: 

The types of offenses committed by 16- and 17-year-olds are very similar.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Common Offenses Leading to Arrest</th>
<th>Age 16</th>
<th>Age 17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theft</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misdemeanor assault</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug possession</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Texas’ Restructured Juvenile System is Well-Positioned to Absorb 17-Year-Olds

Juvenile arrests have declined 61% since 2007, a period in which youth and state dollars were moved out of ineffective and expensive state facilities and into community-based programs. This change precipitated a 68% increase in per capita funding for juvenile probation programs and additional capacity for 17-year-olds.

Raising the Age is a Smart-on-Crime Reform: It Will Benefit Young People and Taxpayers, While Making Communities Safer. Support Legislation to Raise the Age!

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Endnotes
2 Solomon, Amy L., In Search of a Job: Criminal Records as Barriers to Employment, National Institute of Justice (June 2012).
3 Texas Appleseed, Raise the Age: 17-Year-Olds in the Criminal Justice System, (March 2017).
4 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Effects on Violence of Laws and Policies Facilitating the Transfer of Youth from the Juvenile to the Adult Justice System, MMWR 2007; 56 (No. RR-9) (2007).
5 Texas Department of Public Safety, Uniform Crime Reports.  
6 Texas Appleseed, Raise the Age: 17-Year-Olds in the Criminal Justice System, (March 2017).
7 Texas Department of Public Safety, Uniform Crime Reports,  