

# CONNECTICUT YOUTH SERVICES ASSOCIATION



## Testimony: H.B. No. 5782 - An Act Concerning The Age of a Child For Purposes of Jurisdiction in Delinquency Matters And Procedures.

Good morning Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor, and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Erica Bromley and I am the Director of Manchester Youth Service Bureau and co-chairperson of the Advocacy Committee for the Connecticut Youth Services Association. CYSA is a professional organization representing Connecticut youth service bureaus. There are currently 98 youth service bureaus serving 127 communities across Connecticut. I am testifying in support of House Bill 5782, An Act Concerning The Age of a Child For Purposes of Jurisdiction in Delinquency Matters And Procedures.

Connecticut is one of only three states that considers all sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds to be adults in the eyes of the criminal justice system. HB 5782 would return sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds to the juvenile court system, allowing for a much broader, and cost-effective, array of intervention and rehabilitation services to be provided. Providing age-appropriate mental health, substance abuse, educational, job-skill, and positive youth development programs for sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds are key components of rehabilitation. These services have been central to youth service bureau programming since YSBs were established close to thirty-five years ago to address the juvenile justice needs of Connecticut's youth. Many Youth Service Bureaus address the abovementioned array of services through the use of Juvenile Review Boards. JRBs were developed by youth service bureaus to provide a comprehensive approach to working with juveniles, and their families, in order to assess needs and develop a personalized service plan that provides both prevention and intervention services. Changes in this law would allow more youth to be served through juvenile review boards.

Mandated by Connecticut General Statute 10-19m, a Youth Service Bureau is an agency operated directly by one or more municipalities that is designed for planning, evaluation, coordination, and implementation of a network of resources and opportunities for children, youth, and their families. Additionally, YSBs are responsible for the provision of services and programs for all youth to develop positively and function as responsible members of their respective communities. YSBs provide juvenile justice, mental health, youth development, community outreach, parent education, teen pregnancy prevention, and child welfare services. More than 64,489 children, youth, and families received services from YSBs during FY05. In addition, YSBs diverted over 23,320 youth from the juvenile justice system during FY05.

We applaud the legislature for recognizing the value of returning sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds to the juvenile justice system. CYSA encourages the general assembly to fully utilize the nearly four decades of experience youth service bureaus bring to the table in addressing juvenile justice issues.

***Connecticut Youth Services Association***  
*is a network of municipally-based, youth service bureaus, established by Connecticut State Statute, whose collective voice promotes healthy development of Connecticut's children, youth, and families through advocacy, education, and training.*

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