



**Middlesex
Coalition
For
Children**

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Testimony of Betsy Morgan, Director, Middlesex Coalition for Children, 30 Gordon Place, Middletown, CT 06457

On: H.B. No 5782 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE AGE OF A CHILD FOR PURPOSES OF JURISDICTION IN DELINQUENCY MATTERS AND PROCEEDINGS.

Judiciary Committee Public Hearing, March 13, 2006

The Middlesex Coalition for Children strongly supports raising the age of jurisdiction for the juvenile courts from 16 to 18.

The Coalition adopted this position as part of a community process last fall, involving several hundred residents of Middlesex County. It is a key issue in a broader agenda of juvenile justice reform adopted by the Coalition, which is relevant to this and other bills under consideration:

Juvenile Justice

Reform our seriously flawed juvenile justice system in these major ways:

- Close CJTS and develop small gender-specific programs throughout the state, retraining current staff.
- **Expand age jurisdiction of juvenile court to eighteen from sixteen.**
- Address disproportionate minority contact; seek racial equity.
- Strengthen and improve juvenile diversion programs to keep children out of the courts.

Consider these additional important changes:

- Mandate that a child's confession be given in the presence of a parent or guardian.
- Restrict the discretionary transfer of children to adult court.
- Provide credit towards a delinquency commitment for time spent prior to disposition in a psychiatric hospital, detention or a secure facility pursuant to a court order.
- Develop mediation programs in juvenile court for the resolution of school, neighborhood or family issues.
- Develop a statewide plan to reduce and/or eliminate the use of seclusion and restraints in public institutions or funded through public funds.

We urge the Legislature to take action **this year** to raise the juvenile justice age jurisdiction to eighteen.