

Testimony on Proposed H.B. No. 6386  
An Act Delaying Implementation of Legislation Raising the Age of Juvenile Jurisdiction  
Judiciary Committee  
Submitted by Marlyn Davila  
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Good morning Senator McDonald, Representative Lawler and other members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Marlyn Davila. I live in the City of Hartford. I am a student at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work. I currently work for a program for low-income urban high school students who want to go to medical or dental school.

I am here today to voice my opposition of the House Bill 6386 "AN ACT DELAYING IMPLEMENTATION OF LEGISLATION RAISING THE AGE OF JUVENILE JURISDICTION".

As a person who has been working with youth for the past 6 years I can see how some teenagers can commit a minor crime just because they want to fit in. Teenagers who have low self-esteem or are having family problems can be easily influence by their peers and/or older adults to commit minor crimes. For example, I worked with a student who lost her mother and was having family problems, she was being encouraged by her peers to skip school and sell drugs with them. However, because of the positive role models she was in contact with in our program she was convinced not to participate in illegal activities. I cannot help think what could have happened to this 16 year old if she did not had such positive role models at that point of her life.

In Connecticut 16 and 17 year olds are not considered to be adults, yet they are tried as adults no matter how minor the crime. Sixteen and seventeen year, who are not consider serious and violent offenders, should be try under the jurisdiction of the juvenile justice system.

When these minors are sent to adult prisons they receive less rehabilitation support than their younger peers who have committed the same crime. They are also more likely to have negative role models in prisons. In addition, when they reenter society they are more likely to be stigmatized and labeled by their peers.

Most importantly trying them as adults does not prevent them from becoming offenders again. According to The Task Force on Community Preventive Services supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention "youth who are transferred from the juvenile court system to the adult criminal system are approximately 34% more likely than youth retained in the juvenile court system to be re-arrested for violent or other crime." (2007).

Any delay in implementing Raise the Age will result in waste of tax payers money because the state has already spent millions of dollars in preparation. Please continue to support the implementation of Raise the Age by January 1, 2010.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.