

Wesleyan Democrats



Presented to Judiciary Committee

March 2, 2009

In Opposition to:

H.B. No 6386, AN ACT DELAYING IMPLEMENTATION OF LEGISLATION RAISING THE AGE OF JUVENILE JURISDICTION

Chairman McDonald, Chairman Lawlor, and Distinguished Members of the Committee,

My name is Nic Yulinsky, a resident of Connecticut for the last seventeen years and a student currently attending Wesleyan University in Middletown. I feel as though the discussion regarding Raise the Age has too often evaded the crucial question. We can talk as much as we want about the economic or public safety sides of the issue, but ultimately this is a law about people. We must allow our government to function in a humane and respectful fashion to citizens of all ages. On time implementation of Raise the Age on January 1, 2010 is a measure that will ensure the fair and reasonable treatment of adolescent offenders.

The economics of the situation show that Raise the Age will be on firm footing. Empty beds and over-staffed facilities in juvenile centers will handle more individuals due to the rule change taking adolescent offenders out of the adult system.

The public safety aspect is equally valid, with fewer young men and women processed into the already pitiful prison system in our state. The crowding situation has gotten so dire we are essentially outsourcing prisoners to other, less-crowded facilities in other states at this point. This measure will keep non-violent 16- and 17-year-old offenders in juvenile facilities dedicated to rehabilitation and vocational training.

Both of these anxieties cannot be ignored, but we as citizens of the United States and of one of America's most compassionate and progressive states should never turn a blind eye to the suffering endured by young people who made mistakes and, under current law, are treated like adults.

I have a friend who spray-painted his initials onto a parking lot outside of a teen center the summer after we completed tenth grade. Police apprehended him shortly thereafter, detained him, and called his father. He was later brought in front of a judge and sentenced to probation and community service. Most

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importantly, this offense was seared into his record.

There is no discussion of whether his decision was of questionable judgment; of course it was. My question to anyone interested in justice, however, is do we want to punish young people for the rest of their lives for youthful transgressions? Do we want to be a society in which the 16-year-old Kit Kat bar thief will never live down his careless crime? Is Connecticut that petty?

Please Raise the Age in Connecticut on January 1, 2010, for the children, past and future, who should never have to shoulder the burden of temporary misjudgment for a lifetime.

Respectfully,

Nic Yulinsky

Brad Spahn, President
Corrine Duffy, Vice President
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Vignatha Reddy, Treasurer
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