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Testimony to the Judiciary Committee

March 2, 2009

Chiefs Anthony Salvatore & James Strillacci, Connecticut Police Chiefs Association

Since passage of the "Raise the Age" proposal as part of Public Act 07-04, the Connecticut chiefs have been part of the team which has labored on its implementation.

The Juvenile Justice Planning and Operations Coordinating Council (JJPOCC) worked for 18 months on executing the intent of the public act. Its recommendations are embodied in **HB #6575, AAC Revisions to Provision Raising the Age of Juvenile Jurisdiction.**

Many of the suggested changes are merely technical, like the insertion of the term "youth" into statutes to extend their scope to the 16- and 17-year-olds who will be considered juveniles. But there are important substantive changes as well.

Section 1 reinstates ordinance violations as delinquent acts, correcting an omission of the Public Act. Section 7 allows an officer, when appropriate, to release a child or youth into his own custody. This will allow more juvenile investigations to be handled in the field, making the interaction less intrusive to the youth and reducing the impact of "Raise the Age" on police facilities.

Section 15 modifies—for 16- and 17-year-olds only—procedures on the use of statements which are the most restrictive in the nation. The section adopts the "totality of circumstances" standard used in 43 states, and will allow a judge to weigh all the circumstances in deciding to admit a youth's statement, provided the officer made a reasonable attempt to contact the youth's parents.

This bill does not eliminate all our reservations about raising the age, but it's a good start, and we support it.

The budget deficit has reduced funds available for state programs, including those resulting from raising the age of juvenile jurisdiction. Responses include three bills on your agenda. **SB #674, AAC Local Expenditures**, would delay till 2012 any capital expenditures needed to detain the additional juveniles. **HB #6386, AA Delaying Implementation**, the Governor's bill, would postpone action on "Raise the Age" two years. **HB #6580, AAC Juvenile Justice**, is a compromise, raising the age only to include 16-year-olds, and extending some additional services to youths.

If there's no money to implement "Raise the Age," we would prefer a simple postponement to the other alternatives. In the meantime, we are committed to helping find an affordable way to attain the goals of the Public Act.

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