

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-0705**

Testimony for Raise the Age Hearing  
Congressman Christopher S. Murphy  
March 4, 2009

Chairmen and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of the scheduled implementation of the Raise the Age legislation. As the former Vice-Chair of this Committee, and the former Chair of the Appropriations Sub-Committee on Judicial and Corrections, I am very proud that this state has chosen to join the rest of the country by moving 16 and 17 year olds out of the adult justice system and into the juvenile justice system.

Study after study has shown that placing juveniles into the adult system only increases recidivism rates. By overemphasizing jail time over rehabilitation and counseling, these misguided young people often become entangled in a life of crime and jail time. In contrast, the juvenile system offers more support to youth, better preparing them to lead positive and productive lives in the workforce as well as their communities.

With 10,000 kids going through the adult criminal system in Connecticut every year, I cannot overstate the harmful impact a delay in the implementation of Raise the Age would have on the state. A two year delay would mean 20,000 more residents are likely to continue a life of crime, draining our economy instead of contributing to it.

In contrast, The University of Chicago and the Urban Institute did an analysis of the fiscal impact of Raise the Age. They projected that the state would realize \$3 in savings for every \$1 we spend on implementation. As stewards of public resources and committed to the long-term well-being of our state's youth, we cannot afford to pass up this opportunity to achieve both smart policy and realize real savings.

But recidivism and a weakened workforce are not the only consequences of placing juveniles in the adult system. Keeping children safe in the adult juvenile justice system is extremely difficult. All-too-often, physical and sexual assault becomes commonplace.

According to the Department of Justice's (DOJ) Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), 21% and 13% of all substantiated victims of inmate-on-inmate sexual violence in jails in 2005 and 2006 respectively, were youth under the age of 18. This number is disturbingly high taking into account that only 1% of jail inmates are juveniles.

Moreover, and not surprisingly, youth have the highest suicide rates of all inmates in jail. As we all too well know in Connecticut, placing juveniles with adults only exacerbates the problem.

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To me, removing 16 and 17 year old children from the adult prison system with all possible speed is a matter of conscience. I recognize the unprecedented financial challenges presented to the State this year, and I realize that these difficulties may result in some small changes being made to the plan to implement the Raise the Age requirements. That being said, the appropriate treatment of young offenders is not just the right thing to do morally; it is also the right thing to do financially. Locking kids away in adult jails just increases their chances of being lifetime wards of the state.

Again, I appreciate your time and the opportunity to testify before you today. I look forward to working with you on this very important issue.

Christopher S. Murphy  
Member of Congress