



**CONNECTICUT
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*...to serve, strengthen
and support Connecticut's
nonprofit community.*

April 1st, 2011

**Testimony of Jon Clemens, Policy Specialist at Connecticut Association of Nonprofits,
Related to**

**S.B. No. 1164 - AN ACT DELAYING IMPLEMENTATION OF PROVISIONS TO RAISE THE AGE OF
JUVENILE COURT JURISDICTION FOR YOUTH SEVENTEEN YEARS OF AGE.**

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for your time and attention to the issues before you today. My name is Jon Clemens and I am a Policy Specialist at the Connecticut Association of Nonprofits, the largest trade organization in the state dedicated exclusively to nonprofits. We are a collaborative of more than 500 member organizations, with a Children's Sector representing more than 140 organizations providing child and youth-related services across the full continuum of care.

CT Nonprofits is strongly opposed to Senate Bill No. 1164, An Act Delaying Implementation of Provisions to Raise the Age of Juvenile Court Jurisdiction for Youth Seventeen Years of Age.

When Connecticut passed legislation to raise the age of juvenile court jurisdiction to cover sixteen year olds we joined 47 other states that were already doing so. We are moving in the right direction but even now we are behind the overwhelming majority of states who place adult court jurisdiction at eighteen. Current legislation would see us "catch up," legally speaking, in 2012; the raised bill before you today would delay that progress until 2014.

Time and again research shows that when kids are served in the juvenile system they are less likely to reoffend and usually spend less time in the system. According to her study, "The Transfer of Juveniles to Criminal Court: Does it Make a Difference?" Donna Bishop, a researcher with Northeastern University, states that "Adult processing of youths in criminal court actually increases recidivism rather than any incapacitative effects on crime control and community protection." Her research showed youth within the adult, criminal courts were more likely to reoffend, to reoffend earlier, to commit more subsequent offenses, and to commit more serious offenses than those of juveniles who were dealt with under a juvenile system.

Connecticut has worked hard to develop a juvenile system to better meet the real needs of those who offend. Through the work of Juvenile Review Boards and Case Review Teams, as well as the creation of the distinction of Families With Service Needs (FWSN) cases, many low and moderate risk youth receive the support, services, and restrictions necessary for their rehabilitation and the safety of the community without having to resort to incarceration. Due to diversion, fewer youth are entering into the juvenile justice system; that along with decreased repeat offense is resulting in excess capacity which could be utilized to serve seventeen year olds.

It is true that seventeen year olds more often need programs related to vocational, life skills, pregnancy, and substance abuse treatment, and we may need to adapt and develop more of these; however, any cost in the short run is far outweighed when you take into account the decreased rates of recidivism for youth served in the juvenile system. Help these kids now, as kids, and you will be less likely to have to pay for their incarceration and substance abuse treatment later. This is the right thing to do, and it's the fiscally responsible thing to do as well.

In closing I thank you for your attention to these matters. I invite you to feel free to contact me if I can be of help in answering any questions, or in bringing together a group of providers with whom you could have a dialogue. Thank you.

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