



# National Juvenile Justice Network

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## TESTIMONY FROM SARAH BRYER DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL JUVENILE JUSTICE NETWORK

TO THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE  
MARCH 2011

### OPPOSING RSB 1164 AN ACT DELAYING IMPLEMENTATION OF LEGISLATION RAISING THE AGE OF JUVENILE JURISDICTION FOR YOUTH SEVENTEEN YEARS OF AGE

Thank you for taking into consideration my written testimony in opposition to HB 5335. I'm Sarah Bryer, the director of the National Juvenile Justice Network (NJJN). The Network leads a network of juvenile justice reform organizations who advocate for fair and developmentally appropriate adjudication for all youth involved in the juvenile justice system. The Network has been in existence since 2005 and currently comprises 39 members in 33 states.

From a national perspective, Connecticut has become our country's leader in ensuring that youth who commit offenses are treated fairly and appropriately. When Connecticut raised its age of juvenile court jurisdiction, the rest of the country caught its breath and applauded. Legislators, administrators, and advocates all across the country now view Connecticut as the example to follow.

Given the concerns that states across the country have about their finances, it is more important than ever for Connecticut to stay the course. Connecticut legislators have demonstrated the true strength of their convictions and their unwavering commitment to children by insisting on taking the long-view of the cost-benefits of keeping youth in the juvenile justice system. Connecticut knows that the long-term fiscal and societal benefits of keeping youth in the juvenile justice system far outweigh any short term costs, and it has refused to back down from crafting policy based on evidence and science.

And indeed, the rest of the country is looking to Connecticut for leadership. At last count fourteen separate states were engaged in efforts to bring youth back to the juvenile court. Either by changing the age of juvenile court jurisdiction or by repealing and amending transfer laws, states are acknowledging that both science and public safety recommend that youth be retained within the juvenile court until at least eighteen years of age. These states include: Arizona; Illinois; Indiana; Maryland; Massachusetts; New Hampshire; North Carolina; Ohio; Oregon; Rhode Island; Vermont; Virginia; Washington, DC; and Wisconsin.

All of us on a national level and across the country are watching Connecticut closely now. We encourage the State to commit to on-time implementation of Raise the Age legislation on July 1, 2012. What you do already has and will continue to have an impact far beyond the boundaries of your state.

Thank you for considering my testimony on RSB 1164. If you would like to follow up with further questions, please contact me at 202/467-0864 x 105 or at [bryer@juvjustice.org](mailto:bryer@juvjustice.org).