

CAMPAIGN FOR
YOUTH JUSTICE

BECAUSE THE CONSEQUENCES AREN'T MIRROR

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**Before the Connecticut Judiciary Committee on SB 18, "The Second Chance Act for Juveniles"
and HB No. 5642, "An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Juvenile Justice Planning
and Oversight Committee"**

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As the CEO at the Campaign for Youth Justice, a national organization working to reduce the number of youth in the adult criminal justice system while promoting more effective approaches in the juvenile justice system, I am pleased to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 18, "The Second Chance Act for Juveniles," and HB No. 5642, "An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Juvenile Justice Planning and Oversight Committee."

Youth who are tried, sentenced or incarcerated in the adult criminal justice system are a population that often times "falls through the cracks." Our organization was founded ten years ago to advocate on behalf of these young people.

**Connecticut's Previous Reforms and National Research Support the Removal of Youth
from the Adult System as Effective Public Safety Policy**

Through its previous efforts to raise the age of criminal responsibility, Connecticut has already studied and applied lessons from research citing that transferring large numbers of youth into the adult criminal justice system actually reduces community safety. Through previous legislation that raised the age of criminal responsibility from 16 years up to 18 years, Connecticut developed a solid base of knowledge and understanding on ways to effectively deter some youth from entering more deeply into the criminal justice system by applying a rehabilitative lens to youth up to age 18. This history of data-driven reform has shown that returning adolescents (ages 16-18) back to the rehabilitative nature of the juvenile justice system improves public safety in Connecticut, as after Connecticut raised the age to 18, juvenile arrests continued to decline.

As Connecticut has already discovered, the overwhelming majority of youth who enter adult court, and even those who are ultimately convicted, are not arrested for more serious, violent crimes. The national data show that as many as half of the youth prosecuted in adult court will be sent back to the juvenile justice system or not convicted at all.