

-YALE COLLEGE- DEMOCRATS

Testimony of Alissa Wang
Legislative Captain, Yale College Democrats

March 14, 2016
198 Elm Street B21
New Haven, CT 06511

In favor: S.B. 18
An Act Concerning A Second Chance Society.

The purpose of a justice system, above all, is to pursue a more just and peaceful society for all its members. That goal supersedes any other, including seeking revenge or inflicting punishment on individuals who commit crime. A justice system has failed if it infringes on the rights of a person but makes no progress in reducing violence or injustice in a community. Under the status quo, in which 18-20 year olds are tried for crime as adults, the Connecticut justice system has indeed failed.

A person 20 years or younger who has committed a crime cannot be justly treated under the same standards used to treat adults. Young adults do not possess the same degree of risk perception or rational judgment, and should not be tried as if they do. It is unfair punishment not only because of the immediate consequences of a judge's ruling, but also because of the lifelong condemnation of a young adult's future to one of educational opportunities cut short, job prospects lost, and economic independence jeopardized.

Raising the threshold age for trial as an adult to 21 would not only eliminate the ethical issues of undue punishment for young people, but would also improve the state of the Connecticut economy. Prioritizing the rehabilitation, education, and employment of young offenders would add to the state's graduation rate, economic productivity, and tax revenue. Cutting the number of people who do not need to be imprisoned but are currently incarcerated would also result in significant savings that would reduce the pressure on Connecticut's badly constrained budget.

It is therefore a clear choice for the Connecticut legislature: vote for S.B. 18 and bring justice to young offenders as well as stimulation for the state economy, or leave in place a system that needlessly swallows state funds and fails to bring justice to those who need it.

Sincerely,

Alissa Wang