

NATIONAL JUVENILE JUSTICE NETWORK

To: Chair and Members of the Judiciary Committee
Re: In Support of HB 5042 and HB 5040

March 20, 2018

Dear Chairman and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

On behalf of the National Juvenile Justice Network, I am writing today in support of House Bills 5040 and 5042. The National Juvenile Justice Network is a membership organization currently comprising 53 organizational members in 44 states across the country and the District of Columbia as well as a growing cadre of graduates from our Youth Justice Leadership Institute. NJJN advocates for policies and practices that treat youth in trouble with the law with dignity and humanity and which strengthen them, their families, and their communities.

The National Juvenile Justice Network seeks to establish age appropriate responses to youth in part by aligning state policies with sound research findings. As you well know, neuroscience shows young people's brains are not fully developed until the age of 25.¹ This -- when added to evidence that shows most young people age out of offending behavior -- indicates that an alternative approach is required to hold college aged, 18-24 year old youth accountable.² To that end, we firmly support the present proposal that would create age-appropriate responses for these young people.

In order to provide young people, the best opportunity to become productive members of society, research shows we must provide resources and supports to help them get on the right path. We believe that HB 5040 and 5042, which would expand youthful offender protections and benefits to those ages 18, 19, and 20 years old would be a smart next step.

Additionally, we recommend expanding HB 5042, since the current proposal excludes many young people who could benefit from a youthful offender approach. The proposal could be strengthened by removing the exclusion of serious juvenile offenses, allowing the judge in the matter to determine what path is best for holding the young person accountable. Putting this

¹ Johnson, S. B., Blum, R. W., & Giedd, J. N. (2009). Adolescent Maturity and the Brain: The Promise and Pitfalls of Neuroscience Research in Adolescent Health Policy. *The Journal of Adolescent Health: Official Publication of the Society for Adolescent Medicine*, 45(3), 216-221. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2009.05.016>

² Moffitt, T.E. (1993). "Adolescence-Limited and Life-Course-Persistent Antisocial Behavior." *Psychological Review* 100(4): 674-701; Galambos, N. L., Barker E. T., and Tilton-Weaver L. C. (2003). "Who Gets Caught at Maturity Gap? A Study of Pseudomature, Immature, and Mature Adolescents." *International Journal of Behavioral Development* 27(3):253-263.

decision in the hand of the judge allows for an individualized decision to be made in light of the young person's status and culpability ensuring the best outcomes for public safety.³

As Connecticut continues to build a robust continuum of care that best supports young people while bettering public safety, we respectfully ask members of the committee to take a stand for young people and pass HB 5040 and HB 5042.

Sincerely,



Sarah Bryer
Executive Director
National Juvenile Justice Network

³ <https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Transitional-Age-Brief.pdf>