

Speaker's Name	Affiliation	Location	Comment Highlights
Regan Miller	Judicial Branch/ District Court Judge	Charlotte	Judge Miller thanked Commission members for their efforts on the commission. He appreciates them looking at things that have always been done the same way to see if changes need to be made. Mecklenburg County has implemented a pre-trial risk assessment and he recommends that the Commission continue to look at possible tools. He noted that there are inefficiencies with DWI appeal de novo, especially when selecting a bench vs. jury trial. He does not believe that judges in superior court shouldn't be paid more in salary or have this cultural distinction from district court judges. We should increase the juvenile age and let juvenile court judges decide who bounds over to adult court on a case-by-case basis.
Kenneth Schoor	Attorney	Charlotte	Mr. Schoor spoke on the need to restore and increase state funding for legal aid, specifically loan repayment. He sees that there are language access issues, especially with self-represented litigants. The system should be revised to assist them (SRLs), especially since it is widely believed that people are better represented by attorneys than by self. He is concerned about a potential case management system that categorizes cases as simple or complex and assigns resources accordingly. He fears that pro se and/or poor people will get classified as case types that get little resources. He also supports raising the juvenile age.
W. Todd Stillerman	Attorney	Charlotte	Mr. Stillerman spoke on the need to restore and increase funding for civil legal aid. He noted that Legal Services of the Southern Piedmont currently have non-traditional and alternate funding, such as grants for veterans and people with disabilities, elderly people, etc., and there is not much unrestricted funding left anymore. He reports that 300,000 people need help from LSSP.
Bob Simmons	Attorney	Charlotte	Mr. Simmons spoke in support of raising the juvenile age. The most important reason he cited: juvenile court treats children as children. He believes that it will enhance public safety and reduce recidivism. Juvenile court punishes children but also engages them and provides support and treatment that reduces recidivism and future incarceration. He stated that it is the right thing to do for our children's futures and for the sustainability of our communities.
N. Hunt Gwyn	Judicial Branch/ District Court Judge	Charlotte	Judge Gwyn thanked the Commission for holding the public hearings. He came today to speak on behalf of family court. He was an assistant DA and since 2000 has been a judge hearing cases of broken families. His district was a pilot district for family court. The median age to disposition is faster than other districts. He provided some stats: 374 days is the median disposition in non-family court districts; in family court districts it is 106 days. He feels that lengthily time to disposition is bad for business and our economy.

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John Arrowood	Attorney	Charlotte	Mr. Arrowood spoke on public trust: we must have highly competent judiciary that must look like the people of NC. He stated that people must believe that judges are independent and although politics has always been a part of the process but lately there seems to be an exacerbation of politics. Each political party in control has passed over merit selection and now is the time to address this. He feels that judges must raise too much money to fund a successful campaign and that instead, we should have a system of appointment by the governor with approval by the general assembly (this part will require a constitutional amendment), then retention elections.
Ryan Stage	Attorney	Charlotte	Mr. Stage in his work with a nonprofit helps victims of DV obtain DVPOs. He worked in private practice for one year before joining the nonprofit. He has received funding from NCLEAF since. He reported that he started with \$120,000 in debt, and the starting salary with his non-profit was \$40,000. Without NCLEAF he would not be able to work in this area. He said that many other young attorneys are in similar situations.
Heather Taraska	Judicial Branch/ Assistant District Attorney	Charlotte	Ms. Taraska has worked as a public servant in the DAs office for 15 years thanks to the loan forgiveness programs of NCLEAF.
Todd Nuccio	Judicial Branch/ Trial Court Administrator	Charlotte	Mr. Nuccio spoke on public trust. He said that many of the same recommendations have been made before. He feels that implementation of professional court management should be expanded throughout the system. Mr. Nuccio is giving the NCCALJ a report that was given to the Medlin Commission from Judge Collier in 1972. He closed by saying that we need the best and the brightest in the court administrator and judge area.
Sonya Pfeiffer	Attorney	Charlotte	Ms. Pfeiffer spoke on pretrial release. She said that every person who works in a courtroom understands this area needs significant reform. She is happy the NCCALJ is studying this issue, including involving an expert that is looking at risk assessment tools. She stressed that too many people are held for minor crimes due to money bail and encourages the commission to build a system where incarceration while awaiting trial is not the norm.
Drew Findling	Attorney	Charlotte	His organization submitted a report to the Commission and thanks it for its work in looking at indigent defense. We need to keep the private bar engaged. We have many fine law schools in NC; should have a robust appointment system and make sure local lawyers are trained and have access to immigration consultants. Make sure that all misdemeanants are eligible for defense due to the collateral consequences. Give back control of this issue to the non-judiciary. Judges should not be involved in the appointment of the public defenders.
Lisa Diefenderfer	Attorney	Charlotte	Ms. Diefenderfer provides civil legal services that deal with many families that require language access services. Without the ability to communicate one cannot access the court system. She encourages more funding for forms, interpreters, etc.

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Eben Rawls	Attorney	Charlotte	As a State Bar counselor Mr. Rawls expresses that the State Bar thanks NCCALJ for taking up their task. He relayed that the mission of State Bar is to protect the public, train and discipline lawyers, and move the field forward. As a private attorney he feels that technology is lacking in district and superior courts, that superior court judges need law clerks, and he supports raising the juvenile age ("16 year olds go in as a rabbit and come out as a rattlesnake").
David Allan	Attorney	Charlotte	Mr. Allan reports that the State Bar supports NCCALJ. He said that the Bar handles over 11,000 complaints against lawyers each year, in addition to advising on informal ethics inquiries and process formal grievances. He holds that IOLTA is important and successful and that, overall, the current system is working hard and well under the management of the legislature. He said that the Bar supports the commission and they would appreciate their support in return.
Bobby Bowers	Attorney	Charlotte	Mr. Bowers said that the State Bar supports the work of NCCALJ and wants to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Commission. He argues that the State Bar is functioning well under the supervision of the Supreme Court and there is no reason to change the way the Bar is currently protecting the public.
Frank Crawford	General Public/ Private Citizen	Charlotte	Mr. Crawford spoke in support of raising the juvenile age. He has worked in juvenile court and has seen the issue of raising the age come up and died many times over the years but realizes that it has gained traction recently. He reports that the social work profession has started collecting data, which shows support to raise the age. He said that states that have raised the age have data that show recidivism has decreased and graduation rates have increased. He believes that the current recommendations are a good first step but don't take North Carolina as far as it needs to go.
Angie Forde	General Public/ Private Citizen	Charlotte	Ms. Forde spoke in support of raising the juvenile age. She said that 16 and 17 year olds are biologically children and, as such, if put in the adult criminal system they become bait for more criminality. She closed by asking please don't let NC be the only state left to raise the age.
Elizabeth Trosch	Judicial Branch/ District Court Judge	Charlotte	Judge Trosch spoke in support of raising the juvenile age. She said that children with criminal records often lose the opportunity for college funding. She noted that restraints on judicial discretion due to structured sentencing discourage a judge to bound over a juvenile because the harsh sentence would be automatic. In her experience, pre-trial release has worked in Mecklenburg County (reduced pre-trial jail population by 45% in 5 years) and she encourages making decisions for pre-trial release should be based on data not money.

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Shiela Peltzer	General Public/ Private Citizen	Charlotte	Ms. Peltzer spoke in support of raising the juvenile age. She argues that keeping children safely away from incarcerated adults and proving treatment in custody would reduce recidivism. She stated that there is an epidemic of children living without fathers and these are the majority of delinquents, dropouts, pregnant teens, poor, homeless, etc., yet gender bias still exists in family courts where mothers win custody and fathers become visitors. Ms. Peltzer implores the Bar Association and the Family Law Section to restore faith in the system and resume shared parenting unless there is clear and convincing evidence that abuse has or will occur.
John Clark	General Public/ Private Citizen	Charlotte	Mr. Clark spoke on judicial selection. He believes that a good argument has been made for appointment vs election of judges.
Becka Tait	General Public/ Private Citizen	Charlotte	Dr. Tate spoke in support of raising the juvenile age. In her experience as a pediatrician working for Juvenile Justice, YDCs are specifically designed to be age appropriate and help children succeed; is the proper place for a juvenile. She told a story of a child in a YDC that benefited from being in the youth system.
Melissa Mummert	General Public/ Private Citizen	Charlotte	Ms. Mummert spoke in support of raising the juvenile age. She is in support of helping people with criminal records access safe and affordable housing and get jobs. She stressed how collateral consequences are prohibitive to normal life. She believes that by raising the age more people will have an opportunity to get back on track and not be harmed later in life by mistakes that were made at a young age. She did mention concern that 16 and 17 year olds currently held in Mecklenburg County may be shipped off to a YDC but overall applauds the commission for leading the way.
Kevin Tully	Judicial Branch/ Public Defender	Charlotte	Mr. Tully spoke about public defender appointment authority. He advocates that the PD should be appointed independent of the judiciary given the sentiments that exist that justice system is rigged and there are biases against people of color. He pointed out that NC is the only state in the nation to have judges appoint PDs in cases. Mr. Tully also advocated for pre-trial release and stated that money bail is a lie, which doesn't keep the public safe nor does it help appearance rates in court. He believes that other things can increase appearance rates, such as supervision, text reminders, etc., and studies have proven this (he cited a study from a university in PA). He encourages the commission to do something about it.
Edward Hinson	Attorey	Charlotte	Mr. Hinson spoke on judicial selection. He believes that there is a perception that money in judicial elections influences outcomes in court cases and by changing judicial selection will improve public trust and confidence. He feels that campaigning distracts incumbent judges and dislikes how judges must raise money from lawyers and potential litigants. Mr. Hinson maintains that the campaign process is unfair (judges cannot run on the issues, cannot defend themselves on these topics) and encourages the commission to look at South Carolina, which has a better process.

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Sharon Wilson-Dye	General Public/ Private Citizen	Charlotte	Ms. Dye felt like she had to go to law school in order to testify in court. She has experienced the abuse of power of judges and other public officials and questions whether the courts are operating under the Constitution. She said that there are no checks and balances on whether paperwork turned in by attorneys is truthful and accurate. She asked that bonds of public officials be made available to the public and that oaths of office should be taken an reordered in a timely manner. She said that public officials stick together and hide the abuses they make against the public. She reports to have found flaws in documents submitted to the courts and was not able to address these issues in court.
Toussaint Romain	Attorney	Charlotte	Mr. Romain represents habitual felons. He said that it isn't true that 16 and 17 year olds necessarily become habitual criminals, but with a record collateral consequences are a bar to life. He remarked that the college students he works with could easily be a defendant if police patrolled college campuses the way they do "the hood." He asks the Commission to reinvest in justice and raise the age.
Robert Stiehl, III	Judicial Branch/ District Court Judge	Charlotte	Judge Stiehl spoke in support of raising the juvenile age. He told about misdemeanor diversion program for 16 and 17 year olds that he is preparing to implement in his district. He spoke on family court, remarking that it smart, efficient, planned case management. He believes that it is essential to build confidences in any of our courts. He asks the Commission not to lose sight of family courts when discussing raising the age, because the same issues that attack families and their support systems are in both. He also spoke on the selection of judges saying that we need quality people who feel passionately about dispensing justice. He noted that the AOC is extraordinarily helpful in assisting with allocating resources and thinks that they should be able to move judges where they aren't needed to places that need them the most.
Jeff Kaye	General Public/ Private Citizen	Charlotte	Mr. Kaye's organization was started on issue of notification to victims/family members of release of suspects/defendants. He said that crime victims rights are not enforced by the constitution like defendants' rights and asks that we defend victims' rights as much as we defend criminals' rights
Genesia Newsome	General Public/ Private Citizen	Charlotte	Ms. Newsome spoke in support raising the juvenile age. She explained that 16 and 17 year olds can be our future leaders, teachers, lawyers, etc. or they will become robbers, etc. She believes that the community need to provide a support system when kids don't have a support system at home.
Kelly Pressley-Perkins	General Public/ Private Citizen	Charlotte	Ms. Pressley-Perkin spoke in support raising the juvenile age. She is a mother of nine children (was a teen mom herself) and survived only with grace and mercy, and with a village has allowed her to succeed. She maintains that scared straight and other community systems have allowed her children to succeed.

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Darrell Gregory	JCPC Chair	Charlotte	Mr. Gregory spoke in support raising the juvenile age. He said that continuing with the old mindset doesn't help our youth it just keeps them incarcerated until they reach the adult system and it will increase recidivism. He argues that the juvenile system has age appropriate resources that will help them succeed while removing the stigma and collateral consequences, which have direct effect on their goals and life.
David Strickland	Judicial Branch/ District Court Judge	Charlotte	Judge Strickland is the lead juvenile court judge in Mecklenburg County. He is concerned that the law will change and there won't be sufficient money for new judges, clerks, juvenile justice officers, new facilities, etc. that will be necessary. They currently have a manageable case load and are able to spend time getting to know the individual children. He is a proponent of the one family/one judge model and explained how the juvenile learns to trust the judge when they see the same judge over and over again; it also helps build public trust and confidence in the system.
Lynelle Moragn	Judicial Branch/ Family Court	Charlotte	Ms. Morgan spoke on professional case management in family law cases. She said that if there isn't effective case management cases age and families stay in crisis. She remarked how self-represented litigants aren't able to further their case the way attorneys know how to and her staff is required to help SRL through the process.
Harrison Lord	Attorney	Charlotte	Mr. Lord spoke on judicial selection. He is the prior chair of the Bar's Young Lawyer chapter and explained how young attorneys are not interested in being judges if they have to subject themselves to the public process of elections, openly campaign, fundraise, etc. knowing they'll have to repeat that process every few years to keep serving. He fears that judge seats will be filled by those with the most political connections and is concerned that fundraising breeds the perception of impropriety and the appearance that money matters hinders judges.
Emma Foster	General Public/ Private Citizen	Charlotte	Ms. Foster spoke in support of raising the juvenile age. She is currently a social worker working with adolescents. She told that Commission that these kids need to know that someone believes in them and that we are willing to take accountability as a society for the system that we have created. She asks that we don't punish them, but rehabilitate them and give them the opportunities that we had.
Mary Nell McPherson	General Public/ Private Citizen	Charlotte	Ms. McPherson spoke in support of raising the juvenile age. She said that all of us are better than the worst thing that we have ever done. She is concerned about the issue of inequity. For example, wealthy children do not feel the full consequences of a bad decision the way poor children do.
Colleen Mosier	Judicial Branch/ Court Reporter	Charlotte	Ms. Mosier offers support as a Court Reporters association to the Technology Committee to bring new advances to the courtroom. She said that court reporters now offer live feeds in the courtroom that can also assist hearing-impaired individuals and improves the accuracy of the court record, which is used in appellate proceedings.

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Louis Trosch	Judicial Branch/ District Court Judge	Charlotte	Judge Trosch spoke on raising the juvenile the age. He said that he is in full favor but has concerns that there is a right way and a wrong way to change the policy. He was a juvenile court judge for 17 years and is extremely concerned that without funding the courts will be inundated with kids that they cannot serve. He sees an incredible need for funding for many of the initiatives that the commission will recommend but we need resources to serve juveniles. He thinks this continues to be a problem in this state. He believes that there is currently a good system of judges approving the transfer of cases to adult court and recommends that NCCALJ look to the work by the Medlin Commission on this issue
Ed Williams	General Public/ Private Citizen	Charlotte	In his time with the Charlotte Observer Mr. Williams thought it was important to use the paper to educate the public on the judges on the ballot. He thinks that while some judges are excellent, some are overly ambitious and it is hard for voters to be able to tell the difference. He said that many people don't know who to vote for and/or don't care because they can't find a way to be educated on the races.
Brian Shipwash	Judicial Branch/ Clerk of Superior Court	Charlotte	Mr. Shipwash spoke on pre-trial release. He said that several studies show that money bail is more effective than pre-trial release, contrarily to what many of you have heard today. He remarked that pre-trial is claiming civil rights because it is the "flavor of the month." He said that pre-trial has been given five hours in front of the commission while money bail has been given two minutes and asks the Commission not to fall for the lies of pre-trial release and let the bail agents put forth their numbs as well.