



JUVENILE REINVESTMENT



IN 2011

North Carolina's General Assembly passed the Justice Reinvestment Act to reform our adult criminal justice system. Those policy changes led to the lowest state prison population in a decade and saved the state nearly \$165 million from 2012-2015. Crime rates decreased during this same time period.

IN 2017

North Carolina's criminal reform efforts are poised to extend to our state's juvenile system. Juvenile Reinvestment is a series of recommendations to improve the justice system's handling of children and teenagers under the age of 18. Those recommendations include treating 16- and 17-year-olds as juveniles except when they are accused of committing violent felonies.



NORTH CAROLINA IS **THE ONLY STATE** THAT STILL PROSECUTES 16-YEAR-OLDS IN ADULT CRIMINAL COURT.



Juvenile reinvestment will **STRENGTHEN FAMILIES** by involving parents in the adjudication process.



Nearly all convictions of North Carolina 16- and 17-year-olds in 2014 — **96.7%** — were for misdemeanors and non-violent felonies.



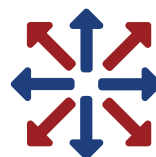
Juvenile reinvestment will **PRODUCE ECONOMIC BENEFITS** for North Carolina and its citizens through lower recidivism, less crime, and increased safety.



North Carolina 16- and 17-year-olds will **NO LONGER BE DISADVANTAGED** by permanent criminal records when competing with youth from other states for jobs, college admission, and financial aid.



Juvenile reinvestment will give law enforcement **MORE TOOLS** for responding to youthful offenders, such as rehabilitative interventions.



Juvenile reinvestment has **WIDESPREAD, BIPARTISAN SUPPORT.**

JUVENILE REINVESTMENT STRENGTHENS FAMILIES AND WILL LIKELY RESULT IN LOWER RECIDIVISM, MAKING OUR STATE SAFER

- North Carolina law requires that when a youthful offender is adjudicated in juvenile court, the child's parent, guardian, or custodian is made a legal party to the case and is required to attend all court hearings. Parental involvement is absent from the adult criminal justice process.
- The focus of juvenile court rehabilitation allows judges to require action by the child's parent, guardian, or custodian, in addition to the juvenile. This could be such legally-binding requirements as attending parental responsibility classes, or participating in the child's psychological treatment.
- North Carolina data show a significant 7.5 percent decrease in recidivism when teens are adjudicated in the juvenile versus the adult system because the juvenile system focuses on age-appropriate curriculum targeted at addressing the root causes of a youth's criminal activity and providing interventions to stem future criminal behavior.
- When they are prosecuted in the adult system, teens recidivate at a rate that is 12.6 percent higher than the overall population.

REINVESTING IN OUR YOUTH WILL RESULT IN ECONOMIC BENEFITS

- Reducing recidivism results in economic benefits by eliminating future societal costs associated with youth "graduating" to the adult criminal system.
- Prosecuting 16- and 17-year-olds in the juvenile system will prevent our youth from being saddled with the collateral consequences of an adult conviction that make it difficult to become a productive member of society. Among other things, an adult conviction can render teens ineligible for employment, military service, public education, and college financial aid.
- Lifetime earnings will increase for youth who will not have the burden of an adult criminal record. Multiple cost-benefit analyses suggest that the long-term economic benefits of making this change in North Carolina will far outweigh any short-term implementation costs.

HELPING LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS RESPOND TO YOUTHFUL OFFENDERS

- Juvenile Reinvestment requires the Division of Juvenile Justice to track all consultations with law enforcement officers about a juvenile. The raise-the-age recommendation requires juvenile court counselors to disclose this information to law enforcement officers so that they can exercise more informed discretion when investigating incidents involving a juvenile.
- Juvenile Reinvestment requires the Division of Juvenile Justice to provide more information to law enforcement officers about complaints that officers file that are later dismissed, closed, and diverted.

THE VAST MAJORITY OF YOUTHFUL OFFENDERS IN NORTH CAROLINA ARE CONVICTED OF MISDEMEANORS

- Consistent with data from other states, stable data shows that only a small number of North Carolina's 16- and 17-year-olds are convicted of violent felonies.
- Of the 5,689 16- and 17-year-olds convicted in 2014, the vast majority of these youthful offenders — 80.4 percent — were convicted of misdemeanors, while 16.3 percent were convicted of nonviolent felonies.
- Only 187 — 3.3 percent of the total — were convicted of violent felonies (Class A-E).

NORTH CAROLINA STANDS ALONE IN ITS TREATMENT OF YOUTHFUL OFFENDERS AGED 16 YEARS OR OLDER AS ADULTS IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

- Forty-four states plus the District of Columbia set the age of criminal responsibility at age 18.
- South Carolina's General Assembly recently unanimously passed legislation to raise its juvenile age from 17 to 18.
- Four other states set the juvenile age at 17.
- The only other remaining holdout state, New York, raised its juvenile age from 16 to 18 in April 2017.

May 30, 2017

JUVENILE REINVESTMENT HAS DIVERSE, BIPARTISAN SUPPORT, *including*

- John Locke Foundation
- North Carolina Chamber Legal Institute
- North Carolina Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice
- North Carolina Judicial Branch
- North Carolina League of Municipalities
- North Carolina Sheriffs' Association