

Tuesday 15th of January 2019

Public News Service



Search this site...



[Get more headlines like this via email](#)

Will "Raise the Age" Legislation Get Movement in Michigan?



SHARE
This Article



Michigan is one of only five states that require 17-year-olds be tried as adults. (Pixabay)



June 6, 2018

LANSING, Mich. - Seventeen-year-olds in Michigan can't vote, can't serve in the military or buy a pack of cigarettes. Yet under current law they can be treated as a criminal. Proposed legislation at the statehouse would raise the age of juvenile-court jurisdiction to 18, which would align Michigan with standard national practice.

Tom Hickson, vice president for advocacy at the Michigan Catholic Conference, said 17-year-olds still are developing and more inclined to risky, impulsive behaviors.

"They maybe have a mistake they've done, certainly not something to be taken lightly, but we want to throw away their life for good because of some mistake they might have done at age 17," he said. "In most cases, it's more appropriate to treat 17-year-olds and send them to the juvenile system."

Hickson said 17-year-olds could access age-appropriate rehabilitative services in the juvenile system that can help them turn their lives around. He noted that raising the age also will save taxpayers money in the long run by reducing serial incarceration. It's estimated that youths prosecuted as adults are 34 percent more likely to reoffend than youths in the juvenile-justice system.

Research has shown that youths are more amenable than adults to rehabilitative programs and behavior modification. Hickson said a [statewide poll](#) found almost every demographic widely supports raising the age from 17 to 18, which shows that Michiganders understand the developmental differences at play.

"We're not trying to coddle criminals here; certainly there's going to be some heinous crimes," he said. "Someone that's 17 years old commits a terrible murder; the way the legislation reads, they still would be able to be sentenced as an adult just like today. But we just don't think it should be the default."

A [package of bills](#) in the House Committee on Law and Justice would not only raise the age but also establish other reforms including funding to ensure 17-year-olds can access services in the juvenile-justice system, prohibit placement of kids younger than 18 in adult jails and prisons, and require public monitoring and oversight of youths who entered the adult system for an offense committed prior to turning 18.

The poll is online at [wixstatic.com](#) and legislation information is at [raisetheagemi.org](#).

Mary Kuhlman, Public News Service - MI

[Get more headlines like this via email](#)

Public News Service



[About PNS](#)

[Media Facts](#)

[Support Us](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[PNS Employment](#)

[Mission/History](#)

[Editorial Policy](#)

[Pitch Our Journalists](#)

Phone: 303.448.9105 Toll Free: 888.891.9416 Fax: 208.247.1830

Your trusted member and audience-supported news source since 1996

Copyright © 2019