

# THE IMPACT OF “RAISE THE AGE” LAWS

“Raise the Age” has proven to be good fiscal and public safety policy. Concerns about large numbers of older juveniles and their associated costs straining juvenile justice systems have not come to pass, and juvenile crime has continued to decline. Ten states<sup>1</sup> have implemented “Raise the Age” in recent years; four have been able to collect impact data:

## MASSACHUSETTS

raised the age of juvenile court jurisdiction to 17 in September 2013.

- In 2013, prior to the passage of “Raise the Age”, the Department of Youth Services (DYS) estimated that there would be 3,338 arraignments of 17-year-olds that year, resulting, if the new law were passed, in 1,302 extra detentions and 335 extra commitments for DHS.<sup>2</sup>
- In 2014, DHS reported that during that year there were just 691 detentions and 165 commitments of 17-year-olds, only about half of what was predicted.<sup>3</sup>

## CONNECTICUT

raised the age of juvenile court jurisdiction from 15 to 17 in 2007, to be implemented in 2010; implementation for 17-year-olds was delayed until 2012.<sup>5</sup>

- The 2007 law’s fiscal note predicted accelerating extra costs for implementing “Raise the Age”: \$36 million in 2010, \$78.5 million in 2011, and \$100 million in 2012.
- In fact Connecticut’s spending on juvenile justice was lower in 2011–2012 than it had been 10 years earlier.
- Connecticut’s “Raise the Age” law had no noticeable negative effect on crime; from 2010–2013 successful completions of probation without re-arrest improved significantly. And from 2008–2014, arrests of 15–19 year olds dropped by over 50%, by far the largest drop of any age group in the state.

### *Statewide arrests in Connecticut by age cohort, 2008-2014:*

15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65+
-54%	-29%	-11%	5%	-28%	-35%	-24%	10%	32%	34%	30%

## ILLINOIS

raised the age of juvenile court jurisdiction from 16 to 17 for misdemeanants in 2010, and for all 17-year-olds in 2014, as police and prosecutors preferred “a uniform age of majority”.

- The proposal to move 17 year old misdemeanants to juvenile jurisdiction was met with predictions that it would “crowd court dockets, probation caseloads, and detention centers”.
- But even though 18,000 17 year old misdemeanor cases went to juvenile court in 2010, “the total number of youth in the juvenile system actually dropped due to decreases in overall crime and juvenile arrests, as well as increased use of diversion options.”
- The number of juveniles in post trial prisons in Illinois has continued to drop each year since 2010.<sup>4</sup>

### *Post-trial juveniles in Illinois Juvenile Prison:*

2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
1,195	1,162	1,144	990	873	782

## MISSISSIPPI

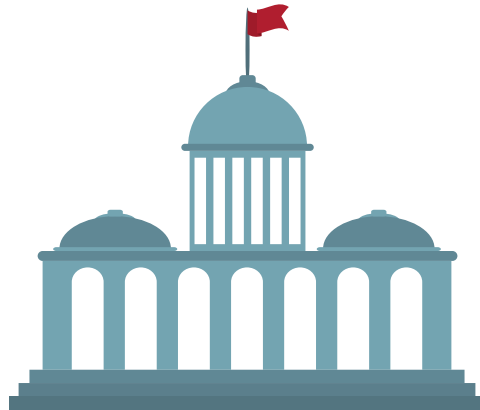
raised the age of juvenile court jurisdiction to 17 in April 2010.

- Overall, raising the age of juvenile jurisdiction to include 17 year-olds has not caused spikes in either juvenile facility population or violence observed within these facilities<sup>6</sup>.
- Between 2008 and 2012, the juvenile population decreased by 21%.
- Before and after the Raise the Age reform, the portion of 17 year-olds or older in juvenile facilities remained around 20%.

Age at Disposition in the juvenile justice system – demographics:

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
% of 17 year-olds and older	19	18	21	21	24
Total number of juveniles	18,535	17,539	16,584	14,568	14,690

→ -21%



## NATIONAL STUDIES

have also shown that “Raise the Age” is good fiscal and public safety policy

- A 2007 study by the Centers for Disease Control concluded that transfers of youth to the adult criminal justice system “do more harm than good” and found a “34% relative increase in subsequent violent or general crime for transferred juveniles compared with retained juveniles.”
- Citing the long-term benefits of reducing recidivism by keeping kids out of the adult system, a 2012 Texas study found that “raising the age of juvenile jurisdiction would have a net benefit of \$88.9 million for every cohort of seventeen-year-olds moved into the juvenile system in Texas”
- A similar 2011 study of a North Carolina proposal to include 16 and 17-year-old “misdemeanants and low-level felons” under juvenile jurisdiction found that it would bring “\$52.3 million in net benefits” annually.

## END NOTES

<sup>1</sup> States that have raised the age since 2006—Mississippi, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Illinois, New Hampshire, Louisiana, South Carolina, New York, North Carolina, and Missouri; the recently passed laws in LA, MO, NC, and SC have yet to go into effect; implementation began for 16-year-olds in New York in October 2018.

<sup>2</sup> The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Administrative Office of the Juvenile Court, Memorandum accompanying “Impact of Raising the Age of Adult Criminal Responsibility in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts from 17 to 18”, March 25, 2013, pp. 22-25.

<sup>3</sup> The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Youth Services, “Raise the Age Legislative Report”, Dec. 12, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Juvenile Justice Initiative, “Impact of Raising the Age of Juvenile Court in Illinois”, August 26, 2015.

<sup>5</sup> For analysis of the impact of Connecticut’s Raise the Age law, see: <http://www.raisetheagect.org/results.html>

<sup>6</sup> Institute for Public Health and Justice, “A Legislated Study of Raising the Age of Juvenile Jurisdiction in Louisiana: The future of 17-year-olds in the Louisiana Justice System”, Feb. 1, 2016.