Raise The Age NOW!

17-year-olds can’t vote or even buy a lottery ticket, but if they are arrested in Louisiana they are automatically prosecuted as adults. In 2016, the legislature overwhelmingly approved the Raise the Age Act to finally include 17-year-olds in the juvenile justice system as most states already do. The law is set to take partial effect in July, but is now under threat from those who wish to delay it.

Kids can’t wait any longer. Every day that we delay, a child continues to be locked in a dangerous adult facility, denied access to services and education, and barred from future opportunities. This prevents children from succeeding and makes them more likely to commit crimes in the future.

When legislators voted to raise the age, they voted to keep both our children and our communities safe. Now they must keep their word to all Louisianans by raising the age in 2018.

Raising the Age is SAFE

- Children in the juvenile justice system are 34% less likely to reoffend than those prosecuted as adults, according to the Centers for Disease Control, because only the juvenile system provides age-appropriate services to get kids on the right track.
- Raising the age will not prevent district attorneys from prosecuting children accused of serious offenses as adults. But over 90% of 17-year-olds are arrested for offenses that involve neither violence nor a weapon.
- Youth in adult facilities face high rates of physical abuse and sexual assault, and are 36 times more likely to commit suicide than children in juvenile facilities.

Raising the Age is SMART

- Young people who have access to education and good jobs are more likely to leave the justice system behind for good. But an adult arrest – even one that does not result in a conviction – is public record and can limit these opportunities for a lifetime.

Raising the Age is COST-EFFECTIVE

- States that raised the age have reduced reoffending rates, allowing them to downsize their juvenile justice systems and save millions in incarceration costs.
- Connecticut, which raised the age in 2012, closed a juvenile facility, reduced its juvenile justice costs by $2 million annually, and saved an overall $58 million in 2015 by reducing reoffending.
- Raising the age will help ensure compliance with the federal law that requires complete separation between children and adults in jails. Most facilities are not built for this, exposing sheriffs to liability and risking the loss of federal funding.

Raising the Age is FAIR

- Raising the age will protect the right of parents to be involved in the court cases of their children. When 17-year-olds are arrested as adults, their parents do not need to be informed of the arrest and do not have a right to be involved in their case.

For more information, visit www.youthjustice.la