

Ingham County Board of Health

RAISE THE AGE RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Michigan remains one of five states in the U.S. that automatically prosecutes 17-year-olds as adults regardless of the severity of the crime, which is unaligned with national best practices, recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions, and Michigan's other governing laws that define "youth" as any individual under the age of 18; and

WHEREAS, the majority of 17-year-olds entering the criminal justice system are arrested for nonviolent, misdemeanor offenses, many of whom would be eligible for diversion in the juvenile justice system; and

WHEREAS, national research on adolescent brain development shows that teens are more inclined to take risks, act impulsively, and succumb to peer pressure, which may lead to delinquent behavior, yet are very responsive to rehabilitative programs and behavior modification during these formative years; and

WHEREAS, research from the Justice Policy Institute (2017) shows that raising the age of juvenile jurisdiction to 18 involve projected costs that were consistently overstated, and those states have instead contained costs, reallocated costs to approaches that keep young people in the community, reduce confinement, and improved community safety; and

WHEREAS, national research shows youth tried before an adult court were 44% more likely to be re-arrested for felony property crimes and 85% more likely to be re-arrested for violent crimes compared to those tried before a juvenile court (Steinberg and Director, 2007); and

WHEREAS, when adolescents are tried as adults, their conviction data is public and thus accessible to employers and other professionals resulting in lifelong consequences including significant barriers to accessing housing, secure employment, and higher education, all of which lead to a lifetime of poor physical and mental health outcomes; and

WHEREAS, the juvenile justice system prioritizes developmentally appropriate community-based programs and diversion services that are designed to rehabilitate and encourage family involvement in treatment, but are not accessible to 17-year-olds in the adult system;

WHEREAS, prosecuting youth as adults increases recidivism (CDC, 2007), and states that have transferred their 17-year-olds to the juvenile justice system have experienced improvements in public safety (Justice Policy Institute, 2017);

WHEREAS, the "Youth In Prison" legislative package, inclusive of House Bills 4607, 4653, 4662, 4664, 4676, 4659, 4685, and 4789 was presented to the Michigan Legislature in the 2017-18 session to raise the age of juvenile court jurisdiction from 17 to 18 years of age and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Ingham County Board of Health wholeheartedly supports raising the age automatic prosecution as an adult from 17-year-old to 18-year-old.