

**An Act to Promote Public Safety and Better Outcomes for Young Adults – SD.530/HD.1295
(Lead Sponsors: Senator Boncore and Representatives O'Day and Khan)**

This legislation will hold young people accountable in developmentally appropriate systems by gradually raising the age of juvenile jurisdiction to include 18 – 20 year olds.

- **Massachusetts currently spends the most money on young adults in the justice system and gets the worst outcomes:** Emerging adults make up 10% of the state population, but represent more than 29% of arrests,¹ 23% of Houses of Correction commitments (HOC), and 20% of Department of Correction commitments.² The Council on State Governments' final report identified emerging adults as a key priority for reform, with the highest recidivism rate in MA (in 2011, 76% of emerging adults released from HOC were re-arraigned within 3 years).³
- The young adult brain is still developing making them **highly amenable to rehabilitation. This development is influenced – positively or negatively – by their environment.**
- **An overly punitive approach can actually cause more offending:** Most young people "age out" of offending by their mid-twenties, particularly with developmentally appropriate interventions. Exposure to toxic environments, like adult jails and prisons, entrenches young people in problematic behaviors, increasing probability of recidivism.
- Shifting 18- to 20-year-olds into the juvenile system, **where they must attend school and participate in rehabilitative programming, would lower recidivism.** CDC research has shown that similar adolescents had a **34% lower recidivism rate** when they were in the juvenile compared to the adult system.
- **Massachusetts already recognizes emerging adults as a distinct population:** child welfare, healthcare, education, labor and other state agencies have created dedicated policies and programs to support young adults' transition to independent adulthood.

This bill would move emerging adults into a developmentally appropriate justice system to reduce recidivism and prevent deeper criminal involvement:

- **Raise the upper age in delinquency and youthful offender (Y.O.) cases to gradually include 18, 19 and 20 year olds over three years.** Our juvenile justice system is designed to provide individualized, developmentally appropriate services for young people. Young adults with serious offenses would still be eligible for adult sentencing in murder and Y.O. cases as is currently law.
- **Expand the upper age of commitment to DYS for emerging adults (18-20)** to ensure there is an adequate opportunity to rehabilitate older youth entering the system. DYS already serves Y.O.s up to age 21; this legislation would allow for extended Y.O. commitment up to age 23.

For more information, please contact Sana Fadel at Citizens for Juvenile Justice, sanafadel@cfjj.org, 617.338.1050

¹ Council of State Governments Justice Center, "Justice Reinvestment in Massachusetts: Key Findings and Policy Options," December 21, 2016. Available at https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/JR-in-Massachusetts_Key-Findings-and-Policy-Options.pdf

² MassINC, "Viewing Justice Reinvestment Through a Developmental Lens: New approaches to reducing young adult recidivism in Massachusetts," December, 2015. Available at <http://massinc.org/research/viewing-justice-reinvestment-through-a-developmental-lens/>

³ Council of State Governments Justice Center, "Justice Reinvestment in Massachusetts: Policy Framework," February 21, 2017. Available at <https://csgjusticecenter.org/jr/massachusetts/publications/justice-reinvestment-in-massachusetts-policy-framework/>