

A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING RAISING THE AGE OF JUVENILE JURISDICTION FROM 16 TO 18 IN NORTH CAROLINA FOR ALL CRIMES OTHER THAN CLASS A THROUGH E FELONIES AND TRAFFIC OFFENSES AND SUPPORTING THE PASSAGE OF HOUSE BILL 280.

WHEREAS, on March 8, 2017, a bipartisan group of North Carolina House of Representative members filed House Bill 280 with the North Carolina House of Representatives Clerk's Office; and

WHEREAS, House Bill 280, titled "Juvenile Justice Reinvestment Act" would raise the age of juvenile jurisdiction to include 16- and 17-year-olds except in the case of certain felonies and motor vehicle laws; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina remains one of only two states in the U.S. that automatically prosecute 16- and 17-year-olds as adults, regardless of the severity of the crime; and

WHEREAS, adolescents prosecuted in the juvenile justice system are less likely to go on to commit another crime compared to juveniles tried in the adult system, which results in lower costs to society and more children growing up to become educated, employed citizens; and

WHEREAS, evidence shows that the juvenile justice system - with programs tailored to how children think and learn - is more effective at rehabilitating youth and that neuroscience and psychological studies prove brain development continues until well into a person's 20s; and

WHEREAS, raising the age of juvenile jurisdiction to 18 will lead to significant long-term financial savings, safer communities, better academic results and overall better outcomes for children; and

WHEREAS, although juvenile crime has been declining, in 2014 alone, more than 17,000 misdemeanor charges were filed against 16- and 17-year-olds statewide; and

WHEREAS, even in cases where the charges are dismissed, there remains the very real and long-term collateral consequences of a public record that could impact a young person's ability to get hired for their first job, be eligible for college financial aid or enlist in the military; and

WHEREAS, 97 percent of crimes committed by 16- and 17-year-olds in North Carolina are either categorized as misdemeanors (80 percent) or non-violent felonies (17 percent); and

WHEREAS, in 2016, the NC Commission on the Administration of Law & Justice under the strong direction and leadership of NC Supreme Court Chief Justice Mark Martin, made a recommendation in favor of raising the age of juvenile jurisdiction (except for A-E felonies and traffic offenses); and

WHEREAS, the NC Commission on the Administration of Law & Justice also recommends expanding existing programs to reduce school-based referrals to juvenile and adult court known as "School-Justice Partnerships;" and

WHEREAS, the NC Sheriffs' Association, NC Police Benevolent Association, NC Association of County Commissioners, NC Association of Chiefs of Police, and NC Chamber of Commerce Legal Institute are all on record in support of raising the age to 18; and

WHEREAS, the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners adopted raising the age of juvenile jurisdiction from 16 to 18 in its 2017-2018 Legislative Goals, placing it within the top five priority goals for the session;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Wake County Board of Commissioners reaffirms its support raising the age of juvenile jurisdiction from 16 to 18 for all crimes other than Class A through E felonies and traffic offenses

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Wake County board of Commissioners asks the North Carolina General Assembly to adopt House Bill 280, together with all necessary funding such a change requires.

Adopted the 20th day of March, 2017.

Sig Hutchinson, Chairman
Wake County Board of Commissioners