

One Love Global plants seeds that build economic security and revitalize urban centers from the 'roots.

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Raise the Age of Juvenile Court Jurisdiction to 18
(House Bills 4133-4146)



We, at One Love Global, strongly support legislation to raise the age of juvenile court jurisdiction to 18. Michigan is one of 4 remaining states that automatically prosecute 17-year-olds as adults for any offense. We know that 17 year olds cannot vote until they are 18; just as we know that brains are not fully developed for the best decision making until age 25. Yet Michigan continues this antiquated practice of locking up our young people with adults. Further, the current law does not align with the standards and policies of the U.S. Supreme Court, the federal government and 46 states, which have all set the age of adult criminal responsibility at 18.

In nearly all aspects of law, Michigan recognizes 18 as the age of adulthood. Seventeen-year-olds cannot vote, legally sign a contract, or purchase tobacco, fireworks or lottery tickets, and are still considered children for whom the state's child welfare system must protect from abuse and neglect. In 2014, Michigan passed "Safe Harbor" laws which require a presumption that any young person under age 18 found engaging in prostitution is a victim of human trafficking and mandates law enforcement to refer minor victims for treatment within Michigan's child welfare system. Yet, if caught in the legal system for any reason, 17-year-olds must be prosecuted, convicted, and sentenced as adults in Michigan's criminal courts, burdening them with a criminal record that reduces their opportunities for future employment.

Research confirms that 17-year-olds are not adults. As part of normal development, they are more likely to take risks, act impulsively, and are highly susceptible to the negative influences of peers. Though these age-related factors may contribute to youthful mistakes, 17-year-olds are much more amenable to rehabilitative programs and behavior modification than older adult offenders. Nonetheless, Michigan prohibits 17-year-olds from accessing youth-focused treatment found only in the juvenile system.

Black youth are disproportionately impacted. We know that Black youth make up about 20% of the Ingham County population, while nearly 74% of detained youth are Black. We need the Michigan House and Senate to pass this legislation as soon as possible.

Respectfully,

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