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ADVOCATES LAUNCH “RAISE THE AGE - WISCONSIN” COALITION TO PASS
BIPARTISAN JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM

Over two dozen nonprofit and advocacy organizations have united to create the Raise the Age – Wisconsin coalition to pass juvenile justice reform in the next legislative session. Raise the Age – Wisconsin is pushing to bring 17-year-olds involved in the criminal justice system back under juvenile jurisdiction.

As one of the three remaining states who still automatically process all 17-year-olds in adult court, Wisconsin has failed to acknowledge what 47 other states already know; that raising the age lowers recidivism rates, responds to often neglected mental health concerns and cognitive development research, provides a restorative and rehabilitative lens to juvenile justice, and can address racial disparities in the criminal justice system. Raising the age is simply good policy, and this coalition believes it is a necessary first step to properly address the injustices and disparities within Wisconsin’s criminal justice system.

Over the past 15 years, states across the country have brought 17-year-olds back to their rightful place in the juvenile justice system, and the proposal has historically received bipartisan support in the Wisconsin state legislature. “Here in Wisconsin, 17-year-olds were moved into the adult system during the ‘tough on crime’ craze of the 1990’s. The same panic that contributed to the mass incarceration crisis we see today” says Kyle Minden, organizer and advocate from the Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin. “Research and data are clear that 17-year-olds are not adults, and leaders on both sides of the aisle agree that they shouldn’t be treated as such by our criminal justice system. It is time for a change.”

The Raise the Age – Wisconsin coalition is comprised of almost two dozen organizations, including the ACLU of Wisconsin, Disability Rights Wisconsin, Ex-Incarcerated People Organizing (EXPO), Kids Forward, Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin, the Midwest Juvenile Defense Center, The Sentencing Project, Wisconsin Association of Family and Children’s Agencies, Wisconsin Alliance for Youth Justice, Wisconsin Community Services, Wisconsin Catholic Conference, Wisconsin Council of Churches, Wisconsin State Public Defender’s Office, Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice, WISDOM and WISDOM affiliates, and Youth Justice Milwaukee. For more information contact kyle.minden@elca.org or visit raisetheagewi.org.

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