



North Carolina Office of the Governor
20301 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-0301

Re: Opposition to HB 834

June 11, 2024

Dear Governor Roy Cooper,

The Sentencing Project is writing in strong opposition to HB 834. In 2019, North Carolina made the appropriate and evidence-based decision to pass “Raise the Age” legislation to join almost every other state and start most cases for 16 and 17-year-olds in the state’s juvenile courts. HB 834 would roll back these critical reforms, harming youth and public safety. This proposed legislation would again allow the state to automatically charge 16 and 17-year-olds as adults for a wide range of felony offenses.

Charging youth as if they were adults increases recidivism and, as such, harms public safety. Youth in the adult system are more likely to commit future offenses than similarly situated young people in the youth system. In a meta-analysis of nine studies on juvenile transfer to the adult criminal legal system, researchers concluded that five studies found that transfer increases recidivism rates, three studies found no effect of transfer on recidivism, and only one study found transfer reduced recidivism. The same meta-analysis found that juvenile transfer increased felony recidivism.¹

The youth legal system was designed to treat children like children. In the adult system, youth don’t have access to the rehabilitation programs and mental health services that are generally more available in the youth system.²Youth also face an increased risk of physical and sexual violence and suicide when they are placed in adult facilities.³

For these reasons, we respectfully urge that you **veto** this harmful legislation.

Thank you for your time. We can be reached at the email address below if you have questions or need any additional information.

Sincerely,

Olivia Naugle, Youth Justice Campaign Strategist. Email: onaugle@sentencingproject.org

¹ Zane, Steven N., Brandon C. Welsh, and Daniel P. Mears. 2016. Juvenile transfer and the specific deterrence hypothesis: Systematic review and meta-analysis. *Criminology & Public Policy*.

² McCarter, S.A., and Bridges, J.B. 2011. Determining the age of jurisdiction for adolescents: The policy debate. *Journal of Policy Practice* 10(3):168–184.

³ Neelum Arya, *Getting to Zero: A 50-State Study of Strategies to Remove Youth from Adult Jails*, UCLA School of Law, 2018.

Established in 1986, The Sentencing Project advocates for effective and humane responses to crime that minimize imprisonment and criminalization of youth and adults by promoting racial, ethnic, economic, and gender justice.