



# RAISE THE AGE

Why Texas Should Treat Kids Like Kids

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## INTRODUCTION

Texas is one of **only three states left** that automatically treats 17-year-olds as adults in the criminal legal system. This means that 17-year-olds have less access to rehabilitative services, and adult system exposure exacerbates trauma.

## THE FACTS

- 95% of 17-year-old arrests in Texas are for nonviolent and misdemeanor crimes.
- Children in the juvenile system have opportunities at record sealing that those in the adult system don't have. Adult criminal records can create barriers to educational attainment, secure housing, employment, and military service.
- Raising the age of juvenile jurisdiction to 18 is expected to save Texas \$88.9 million for every cohort of 17-year-olds.

## WHY SHOULD TEXAS RAISE THE AGE?

### 1. Prioritize Physical & Mental Health

Incarcerated youth in adult facilities are 5 times more likely to become sexually assaulted, 50% more likely to be attacked by a weapon, and 36 times more likely to commit suicide

### 2. Cut Unnecessary Costs for Taxpayers

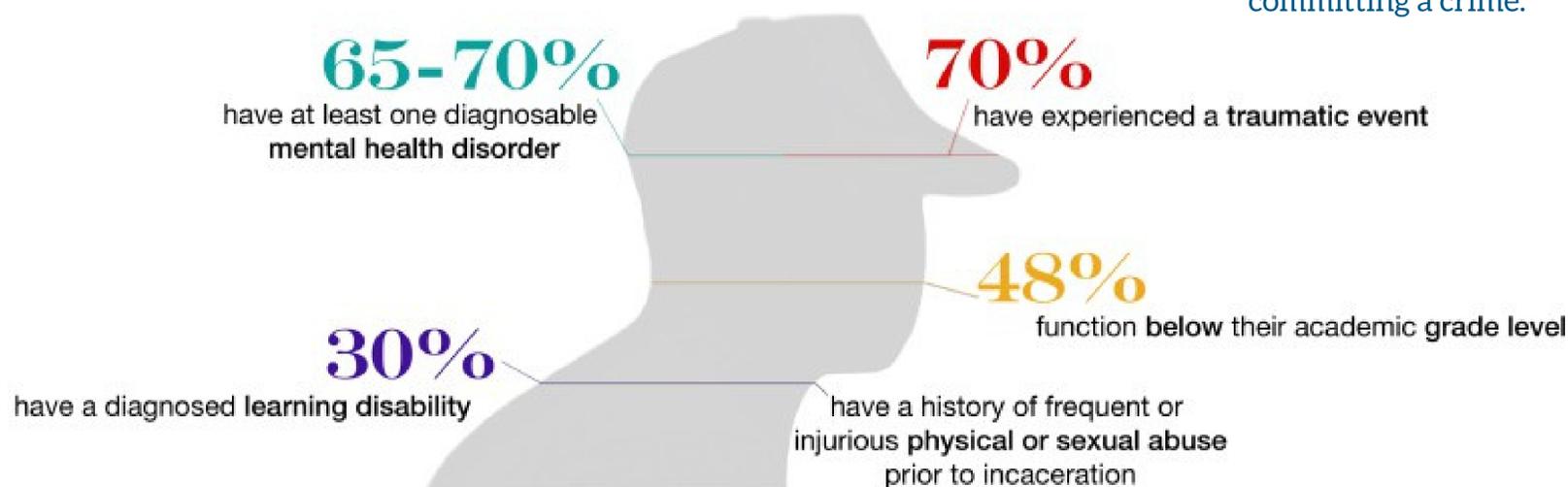
A robust, Texas-specific cost-benefit analysis revealed that raising the age of juvenile jurisdiction in Texas would result in a **net benefit of \$88.9 million** for each cohort of 17-year-olds moved to the juvenile system.

### 3. Decrease Rates of Re-Offending to Keep Communities Safe

Keeping 17-year-olds out of the adult justice system is predicted to decrease the likelihood of re-offending by 34%, since children are more likely to be provided with resources that meet their needs.

### 4. Prevent Overcrowding in Light of COVID-19

Throughout the pandemic and during the winter storm, children in Texas' adult jails and prisons have faced inhumane conditions. This increases barriers to rehabilitation and risk factors associated with committing a crime.



VULNERABILITY OF INCARCERATED YOUTH

## WHAT CAN THE TEXAS LEGISLATURE DO TO ENACT CHANGE?

Pass Raise the Age legislation like:

**HB 486 | HB 967 | HB 1273 | HB 1430**