



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

David Carlucci

## Senator Carlucci Calls for “Raising the Age”

DAVID CARLUCCI February 20, 2015

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Senator David Carlucci was joined by local and statewide organizations to support “Raising the Age” – allowing 16 and 17 year old offenders to be treated as juveniles in the criminal-justice system.

New York and North Carolina are the last two states in the U.S. who still treat 16 and 17 year olds, regardless of their crimes, as adults rather than juveniles in the criminal-justice system.

In 2014, a New York State Commission on Youth, Public Safety and Justice was formed to make recommendations on how best to raise the age of juvenile jurisdiction to age 18, improve outcomes for youth, and promote community safety. Senator Carlucci is pushing for \$25 million in the 2015 New York State budget to implement the Commission’s recommendations, which will plan, create and expand services for juvenile offenders. This includes:

- Diversion and probation services for 16 and 17 year old offenders;

- Placing newly sentenced 16 and 17 year old youth with the Office of Children and Family Services, rather than in adult correctional facilities;
- Raising the age of juvenile offenders to 17 on January 1, 2017 and to age 18 on January 1, 2018.

At the press conference, Senator Carlucci was joined by Jim Saint Germain, a community activist, who at the age of 15 was arrested for a felony drug charge, and because of his age, was sent to a group home rather than prison. Germain credits the supportive services he received for his rehabilitation, which afforded him the opportunity to turn his life around, and eventually become a graduate student.

"It might make people uncomfortable to talk about what happens to young people when they go to prison, but this is an important issue New York State needs to deal with," said Jim Saint Germain. "I was very fortunate. When I was arrested at 15, I was able to go through a system that was focused on rehabilitation and the services I needed to become a successful member of society. If I was one year older, it would have been a completely different situation. I would have been placed with adult men, who were in a lot more trouble than me. Studies have shown that treating 16 and 17 year olds as adults keeps them in the system for much longer, and gives them less of a chance for a future."

"In October of 2014, I hosted a hearing on New York State's Mental Health Supports and Services, entitled, "Raising the Age," said Senator David Carlucci. "After hearing testimony from mental health professionals and families affected by mental illness, it was clear we need a new system that supports our youth, especially those with disabilities. Jim's personal experience and impressive story is a true testament to why these laws need to be changed. New York needs to focus on rehabilitation for our youth, not incarceration."

"Comprehensive reforms to our juvenile justice system are long overdue," said Page Pierce, Executive Director of Families Together in New York State. "The recently released recommendations provide advocates and legislators alike with evidence driven, developmentally appropriate blueprint for transformation that will propel New York State into a position of leadership on juvenile justice policies. Our children deserve better, they deserve the opportunities such reforms will provide and today we stand on the precipice of delivering better."

"In Westchester County, in 2013, 948 16 and 17 year olds were arrested," said Allison Lake, Deputy Director of the Westchester Children's Association. "Seventy one percent of their crimes, holding true to state and national trends, were for misdemeanors. These young people are coming back to our communities. Providing rehabilitative, therapeutic and educational opportunities that will help turn their lives around, will make our communities safer and give our youth a second chance for a productive adulthood. We urge NY State to raise the age and provide funding for these services."