



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jesse Hamilton

## Equal justice under law Means Raise the Age in NY

JESSE HAMILTON January 19, 2017

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"Equal justice under law" is emblazoned on our United States Supreme Court Building. We have yet more work to do to bring those words to life. For far too many New Yorkers, when they encounter the justice system they do not receive equal justice.

Instead of a speedy trial, they receive unwarranted delays and slow justice. Instead of bail set according to community safety, they receive excessive bail and unreasonable justice. And instead of justice that takes the best of reason and science on board, they receive

uninformed and insensate justice.

Unstinting reporting by journalists has shared the stories of young people like Kalief Browder – who faced the nightmare of spending years in jail on the basis of a mere accusation. His story, and the lives of so many other New Yorkers impacted by our justice system, demonstrates why we must pass Governor Cuomo's 2017 Criminal Justice Reform Act.

All the elements of the Governor's proposal are important, but particularly important are the Raise the Age provisions. We know that young people are brutalized by uniformly putting them through a justice system designed for adults. We know that adolescent brains are not fully developed. And we know that the life chances of young people put through our justice system are severely impacted by this policy. That's part of the reason 48 other states have taken a different path than New York. It is time for us to bring our justice system up to the high standard "equal justice under law" demands.

Time to #RaisetheAge in New York State. I will join my Senate colleagues in efforts to pass legislation to raise the age of criminal responsibility in NY to 18. Our young people deserve better.