



Citizens
for
Prison Reform

Judiciary 3/7/19

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Honorable Judiciary and Public Safety Committee Members,

We are writing to urge you to support the Raise the Age package of bills that are in your committee. Our organization began back in 2011, when I learned of several juveniles in the adult psychiatric prison, which was then Huron Valley Men's Prison Facility. My son was one of them. He begged me to help the others, ages 14 to 16 years old. While they were to be in "sight and sound" separation, they were simply in isolated cells placed next to adult psychiatric prisoners. None of these youth we assisted had a crime horrendous enough for them to be put these conditions.

These youth witnessed and experienced horrifically traumatic events that has exposed them to a life of trauma. They lived in isolation, in solitary confinement, **yet could hear and see the adult inmates and what was going on around them.** My son called crying, stating he saw a man with his stomach cut open, who was playing with his intestines. Another time he saw a man who was covered in feces and eating it. We began organizing letter campaigns to the then newly elected Governor Snyder and legislators. This was the beginning of Citizens for Prison Reform.

While some changes have been made within the system, partly due to the awareness we brought to the situation, we know that there are still issues with the reality of just how "sight and sound" separation, along with rehabilitative programming can occur when these youth need intensive psychiatric treatment, as some need when they enter the system. The Department of Corrections is not capable of providing this level of care.

It is time we do what is right for youth and children in Michigan, we have waited far too long. I urge you to think about if this happened to be a loved one in your family, would you want to give them the best chance of rehabilitation and to turn their life around? It is time we get smart on crime, and realized that in very rare circumstances, there may be a situation to charge someone younger than 17 as an adult. That is still possible even if Raise the Age bills are passed.

Sincerely,

Lois (DeMott) Pullano
Citizens for Prison Reform
Founder, President