

SB 1014 Creates an Automatic Hearing Before Treating Youth as Adults in Our Criminal Justice System

Currently under Oregon law, juveniles are automatically treated as adults when charged with a Measure 11 crime. This process makes little sense given that research shows youth treated as adults are more likely to re-offend. Juveniles should be treated as adults in criminal court only after very serious consideration by a judge who weighs the individual circumstances. Rather than automatically being treated as adults, SB 1014 would allow youth charged with a Measure 11 crime to receive a hearing so that a judge can determine whether adult court is the best approach for accountability, public safety, and the rehabilitation of the juvenile or whether being sent to juvenile court would deliver the best results.

There is a large body of research that suggests treating youth as adults in the criminal justice system is an ineffective strategy to promote public safety.

More than 100 years ago, the country's first juvenile court was created in Chicago with the acknowledgement that youth are not finished products and could greatly benefit from education, mental health treatment, and vocational training unavailable in adult corrections systems.

While intending to be tough, we have forgotten to be smart. As more youth get treated as adults within our criminal justice system, we see their future prospects for school, employment, and productive contributions to society diminish. Additionally, this approach appears to actually increase the likelihood that young offenders will re-offend.

- Adolescents are still developing impulse control, foresight of consequences, and ethical reasoning. They require a different approach to culpability and accountability.
- There is a strong record of youth successfully transforming themselves when given access to developmentally appropriate treatment and programs.
- Research from around the country shows that youth treated in adult court are more likely to re-commit future crime and recidivate.
- Laws around the country acknowledge a difference between adults and adolescents when they prevent juveniles from sitting on juries, voting, and marrying without parental consent. Isn't treating them as adults in the criminal justice system a double standard?

Pass SB 1014. The Future of Our Youth Depends on It.