



June 12, 2013

The Honorable Pat Quinn, Governor
Room 207, State Capitol Building
Springfield, IL 62706

Re: HB 2404

Dear Governor Quinn:

On behalf of the ACLU of IL and our 20,000 members across the state, I urge you to support House Bill 2404. A reform spearheaded by the Juvenile Justice Initiative (JJI), HB 2404 allows 17 year olds charged with felony offenses that are not subject to automatic trial in adult court to be treated as juveniles. This is a long sought positive policy change, supported by many, that will improve the outcomes of 17 year olds facing felony prosecution.

The Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC) supports HB 2404, finding that it is anticipated to be a manageable change and will promote uniformity and clarity.¹ Among the close to 30 organizational supporters of this initiative are the Illinois States Attorneys Association and the Cook County Sheriff, Tom Dart.

An additional potential benefit from this change in the law is better public safety outcomes. In 2007 the U.S. Center for Disease Control concluded that trying youth in adult court has significant negative effects on public safety since youth tried as adults are 34 percent more likely to reoffend than those tried in juvenile court.²

Our interest and long standing partnership with JJI in support of this legislation lies with our belief that the benefits of juvenile court jurisdiction such as mental health services, drug treatment and community

¹ See www.ijjc.illinois.gov/rta

² CDC Task Force on Community Prevention Services –November 2007

based services should be available to all 17 year olds. Moreover, an adult felony conviction poses a significant barrier to financial aid, housing and employment opportunities.

House Bill 2404 would place Illinois in the company of 38 other states and the federal government that use the 18th birthday as the age of adult criminal jurisdiction. This makes sense in light of the fact that the age of majority for most legal matters is reached on the 18th birthday.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of our request. HB 2404 is good public policy and we urge your prompt action in signing it into law.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mary Dixon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mary Dixon
Legislative Director