A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING RAISING MICHIGAN'S AGE OF JUVENILE JURISDICTION FROM 17 TO 18 AS PRESENTED IN THE "YOUTH IN PRISON" LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE, INCLUSIVE OF HOUSE BILLS 4607, 4653, 4662, 4664, 4676, 4659, and 4685

WHEREAS, Michigan remains one of five states in the U.S. that automatically prosecutes 17-year-olds as adults regardless of the severity of the crime, which is unaligned with national best practice, recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions, and Michigan's other governing laws that define "youth" as any individual under the age of 18; and

WHEREAS, the majority of 17-year-olds entering the criminal justice system are arrested for nonviolent, misdemeanor offenses, of which many would be eligible for diversion in the juvenile justice system; and

WHEREAS, national research on adolescent brain development shows that teens are more inclined to take risks, act impulsively, and succumb to peer pressure, which may lead to delinquent behavior, yet are very responsive to rehabilitative programs and behavior modification during these formative years; and

WHEREAS, research from the Justice Policy Institute (2017) on states that raised the age of juvenile jurisdiction to 18 shows that the projected costs were consistently overstated, and those states have instead contained costs, reallocated costs to approaches that keep young people in the community, have reduced confinement, and improved community safety; and

WHEREAS, national research shows youth tried before an adult court were 44% more likely to be re-arrested for felony property crimes and 85% more likely to be re-arrested for violent crimes compared to those tried before a juvenile court (Steinberg and Director, 2007); and

WHEREAS, when adolescents are tried as adults, their conviction data is public and thus accessible to employers and other professionals resulting in lifelong consequences including significant barriers to accessing housing, securing employment, and furthering education, all of which lead to a lifetime of poor physical and mental health outcomes; and

WHEREAS, the juvenile justice system prioritizes developmentally appropriate community-based programs and diversion services that are not accessible to 17-year-olds in the adult system, are designed to rehabilitate, and encourage family involvement in treatment;

WHEREAS, prosecuting youth as adults increases recidivism (CDC, 2007), and states that have transferred their 17-year-olds to the juvenile justice system have experienced improvements in public safety (Justice Policy Institute, 2017);

WHEREAS, the "Youth In Prison" legislative package, inclusive of House Bills 4607, 4653, 4662, 4664, 4676, 4659, 4685, and 4789 was presented to the Michigan Legislature in the 2017-18 session to raise the age of juvenile court jurisdiction from 17 to 18 years of age and

WHEREAS, a funding mechanism for the proposed change in legislation is currently being investigated through various platforms regarding the additional expenses that may be incurred by providing juvenile justice services to 17-year-olds and may exceed the current amount expended by counties on juvenile justice services.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners hereby urges the Michigan Legislature to pass the "Youth in Prison" package, inclusive of House Bills 4607, 4653, 4662, 4664, 4676, 4659, and 4685 to align Michigan's procedures with standard national practices and raise the age of juvenile court jurisdiction from 17 to 18; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Board of Commissioners further urges the Legislature to explore and adopt an appropriate funding mechanism through the Department of Health and Human Services to cover the additional costs associated with increasing the age of the juvenile court jurisdiction from 17 to 18; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Board of Commissioners directs the County Administrator to send copies of this resolution to the Governor of the State of Michigan, Washtenaw County's state Legislative delegation, and the Michigan Association of Counties.

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