



April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2019

Chair Williamson and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

Right on Crime urges your support of Senate Bill 1008 to more effectively hold youth accountable for crimes.

Right on Crime is a national campaign of the Texas Public Policy Foundation, in partnership with the American Conservative Union Foundation and Prison Fellowship, that supports conservative solutions for reducing crime, restoring victims, reforming offenders, and lowering taxpayer costs. We have worked extensively with Grover Norquist, Newt Gingrich, and other conservative leaders across the nation to pass sensible public safety legislation.

As the federal government and states across the country move to right-size their prison system to reduce both crime and costs to taxpayers, Oregon has the opportunity to join the chorus of common sense, effective youth justice legislation by passing SB 1008.

Children should be held accountable for their actions. But every parent knows that children are not the same as adults. Their understanding of risk and consequences are underdeveloped and they are more susceptible to pressure from others. Every parent also knows that children have a unique capacity for growth and change.

In just the last five years, conservative states like North Dakota, Utah, and Arkansas have led the way in youth sentencing reform, but Oregon lags behind. Oregon's current system ignores what adolescent development research has well documented and wastes taxpayer dollars.

Juvenile programs, like those at the Oregon Youth Authority, can and have prevented delinquent youth from becoming career criminals, which means safer neighborhoods and more productive citizens. Unfortunately, that investment is often wasted when youth transfer to adult prisons. The bottom line is that excessive youth lockups are a drain on state budgets and don't make communities any safer.

Oregon has the opportunity to join conservative-leaning states with sensible legislation in SB 1008. The bill allows a prosecutor to request that a youth be charged as an adult, but removes the automatic presumption in every case that a child be charged as an adult. It also ensures appropriate, trauma-informed notification for crime victims. The bill does NOT automatically shorten sentences for *any* youth.

SB 1008 promotes fair, cost-effective, age-appropriate ways to ensure that juveniles are held accountable for harm they have caused and gives a more effective path toward rehabilitation for when the vast majority of youth inevitably return to the community. Right on Crime urges your support of SB 1008.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Marc Levin