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GOVERNOR ANDREW M. CUOMO

**GOVERNOR CUOMO CALLS ON LEGISLATURE TO RAISE THE AGE OF  
CRIMINAL RESPONSIBILITY THIS SESSION**

***Enacted State Budget Includes \$135 Million to Support Implementation of New  
Policy***

***Governor Also Announces State to Hire 103 Additional Guards to Serve in Adult  
Facilities across New York***

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today called on the state legislature to pass the Governor's proposal to raise the age of criminal responsibility in New York. Following a tour of Greene Correctional Facility in Coxsackie, the Governor also announced that the state will hire an additional 103 full-time correctional officers to bolster safety and security throughout the state's network of correctional institutions.

"Raising the age will fundamentally improve both our justice system and public safety – and with the funding to make it happen already set aside, it is imperative that the legislature pass this reform before the end of session," Governor Cuomo said. "By allowing the status quo to continue as is, we are relegating hundreds of teenagers each year – mostly young men of color – to an abusive prison environment that makes them more likely to commit crimes in the future. That is not only an injustice; it is an injustice that compromises public safety, and we must make a change. It's time for the legislature to raise the age."

New York State is one of only two states in the nation that automatically prosecute 16- and 17-year olds as adults. Currently in New York, youth are detained with the adult population in local jails while awaiting trial. If convicted as adults, these teenagers are then matriculated into the greater adult prison population.

To address this injustice, Governor Cuomo joined advocates calling on the state legislature to pass legislation to Raise the Age, which follows [final recommendations](#) from the Commission on Youth, Public Safety and Justice. Under the Commission's recommendations and as outlined in the bill before the legislature, 16- and 17-year olds will be processed as juveniles for all crimes except for crimes of serious violence and all minors will have access to rehabilitation services.

This year's Budget includes \$135 million, some of which will be immediately available to local governments upon enactment of legislation to Raise the Age.

During the visit, the Governor also highlighted the importance of supporting a safe environment for inmates and correctional officers. Over the last several years, violent incidents at adult correctional facilities have increased. In an effort to reverse this trend, the state is hiring an additional 103 full-time correctional officers. Hiring for these officers will begin in the next several months and all 103 will be in place by the end of the year.

Anthony J. Annucci, Acting Commissioner of the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, said, "I appreciate Governor Cuomo taking the time to tour today and to see first-hand the daily issues and challenges within an adult correctional setting where staff and inmates deserve the safest environment available. The incarceration of certain 16- and 17-year-olds simply cannot be justified any longer and it's time to end the status quo. The Governor's foresight to commit only the most dangerous criminals not only makes sense, it will reduce prison costs and curb recidivism."

Soffiyah Elijah, Executive Director of the Correctional Association of New York, said, "We must raise the age of criminal responsibility in New York. Sending 16- and 17-year olds to prison for what are often offenses that do not warrant it actually increases the rate of recidivism, and it subjects these predominantly minority teenagers to horrible conditions of abuse. The human brain is also not fully developed at this age, so it is simply unjustifiable that we are subjecting these young men and women to this kind of hostile environment, which only sets them on a path to a future of heightened crime. I stand with Governor Cuomo – we must make New York's juvenile justice system smarter and more just – the legislature must raise the age this year."

### **Raise the Age: The Facts**

Youth housed in adult facilities are:

- 5 times more likely to be sexually assaulted;
- 2 times more likely to be injured by prison staff; and
- 8 times more likely to commit suicide than their peers in juvenile facilities.

In addition, today:

- Black and Hispanic youth make up 33 percent of 16- and 17-year olds, but comprise of 72 percent of all arrests and 77 percent of all felony arrests across New York State
- Young men of color make up 82 percent of youth sentences to adult confinement.

By raising the age and implementing common-sense measures that help young offenders get back on track through means other than imprisonment, New York can

reduce crime, recidivism and costs to the state. Furthermore, failing to Raise the Age will pose a continued threat to public safety, as youth processed as adults have 26 percent higher likelihood of re-incarceration than youth processed as juveniles.

Further, New York spends significant resources confining youth not accused of committing any crime. More than \$100 million is spent annually to house youth in detention and placement, even when they are not accused of committing any crime. Other states address needs of these youth more effectively and at a reduced cost through robust community based services, many of which are included in the Governor's Raise the Age proposal.

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