



March 16, 2016

TO: Sen. Richard Sears, Chair
Sen. Joe Benning, Vice-Chair
Senate Judiciary Committee

FROM: Auburn Watersong, Associate Director of Public Policy
RE: H.95 - jurisdiction over delinquency proceedings by the Family Division of the Superior Court

Thank you for the invitation to speak to you about H. 95. With regard to minor offenders, the Network recognizes:

- Recent scientific research shows that juveniles' brains are still developing until the age of 25;
- Juveniles hold a capacity for change and the potential for rehabilitation;
- Violence prevention includes accountability, supervision, and the education of our offending youth.

For these reasons, the Network supports finding ways to address juvenile cases that provide young offenders with proper accountability, supervision and education in hopes that such comprehensive systemic response could lead to successful rehabilitation and ultimately to the prevention of future violence.

While we acknowledge the efforts to better address juvenile offenders concerns as outlined in H.95 and the proposal brought forth in committee, the Network respectfully requests careful consideration of the victims' rights in juvenile proceedings, ensuring that victims do receive comprehensive and ongoing notification and information. Given the variety of important events that can occur throughout the process of a particular case (such as the arrest and arraignment of the offender: bail proceedings, pretrial proceedings, dismissal of charges, plea negotiations, trial, sentencing, appeals, probation or parole hearings, release or escape of the offender etc.), it is critical that the victim remain engaged and informed at every step of the process. H.95 generally supports these concerns.

Unfortunately, some juveniles do commit very serious sexual violence and domestic violence crimes. In such egregious cases, there seems to be no reason that victims in juvenile cases are not afforded the most expansive supports available to victims in adult criminal cases. Strong victim notification processes ensure transparency, safety, accountability and an opportunity for victims to receive restitution. The Network supports the testimony of Cara Cookson, from the Center for Crime Victim Services and we join the Center in support of further expansion and continued clarification of crime victims' rights in juvenile cases.