



End Mass Incarceration  
Georgia Network

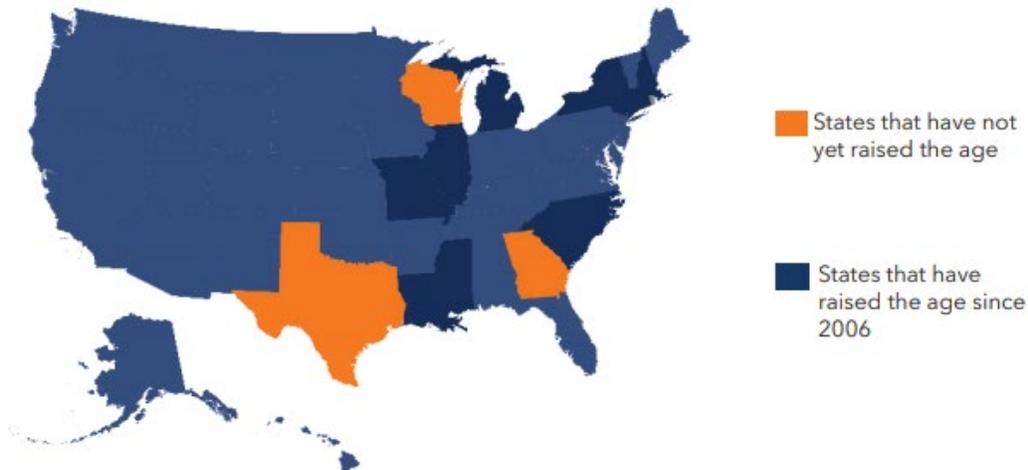
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## Why Raise the Age in Georgia? Support HB 272

Georgia lawmakers should support HB 272 to raise the age of juvenile court delinquency jurisdiction in Georgia to age 18 so that youth who are 17 years old will be served in the juvenile court system.

**Georgia is one of only three states that has not increased the age of juvenile jurisdiction to age 18.** 47 other states now keep 17-year-olds in the juvenile system. 47 other states realize that "raise the age" is about prevention, intervention and better outcomes, not about lack of accountability.



[Map courtesy of Voices for Georgia's Children]

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### Here are some important points to consider:

- Allowing 17-year-olds to be dealt with in the juvenile system is a logical next step to support reforms already universally supported by Georgia's lawmakers.
- Building on Georgia's success in updating the juvenile law will further align our state with best practices around the country.



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- Studies about brain development support the idea of keeping youth who commit offense in juvenile court until at least age 17. Numerous health experts confirm that the brain's frontal lobe — referred to as the “executive” part of the brain — is not fully developed until the mid-20s. This part of the brain regulates decision-making, planning, judgment and impulse control.
- Current law shuts out parents of 17-year-olds. These children — and their parents — will benefit from the right of parental support as they navigate the court system. In many cases parents do not find out about their child's arrest until it becomes a barrier in college applications.
- In juvenile court, a 17-year-old is likely to be mandated to attend school, make restitution to victims and attend community-based rehabilitative programs that focus on the causes of the problem behavior.
- Raising the age of jurisdiction will not reduce or minimize current law for youth who are found guilty of committing violent offenses.