IN SUPPORT OF HB 4776 [Rep. Will Guzzardi - Kelly Cassidy-Terra
Costa Howard, Anne Stava-Murray, Joyce Mason, Carol Ammons, Rita
Mayfield, Thaddeus Jones and Abdelnasser Rashid]

RIGHT-SIZING JUVENILE COMMITMENT
To End Incarceration of Elementary School Children

What the bill does –
Raises the age for commitment to the Dept. of Juvenile Justice from 13 to 14 because elementary school age
children are better served with evidence based alternatives in the community.

Why this is Needed -
Youth Correctional Leaders Support Age 14 because “It is much more effective and developmentally
appropriate to address the behavior problems of young children outside of the legal system.”

- Children’s brains are still developing – “Research on brain science and adolescent development
consistently finds striking differences between youth aged 16 and older versus those 14 and below,
leaving the younger children far less able to understand their proceedings and participate fairly in the
court process.”
- Removing young children from home and exposing them to detention/confinement can cause
serious trauma with lasting negative consequences.
- Racial disparities are profound - low income children of color are more likely to be confined than white
children.

IF not confined, how can young children be held accountable?
JUVENILE COURT JUDGES have many options for conditions for probation or supervision that
can include community alternatives to commitment to IDJJ that are evidence-based and
individualized AND have proven more effective than IDJJ commitment, as evidenced by the success
of Redeploy Illinois. Examples include multi-systemic therapy (MST) that works with child & family to
address underlying issues ranging from education to transportation/housing, and behavioral healthcare.

NUMBERS are LOW - Harm is Profound - Fewer than 6 commitments/year of 13 year-old
children to IDJJ statewide over the past 5 years. None for murder.

SUPPORTERS -Cook County Justice Advisory Council, the Law Office of the Cook County Public
Defender, Restore Justice, TASC (Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities), ACLU of Illinois,
Illinois Alliance for Reentry and Justice. PTA of Illinois, Illinois Prison Project Action Fund, Unitarian
Universalist Prison Ministry of Illinois, Strengthening Chicago’s Youth, Mothers Against Wrongful
Convictions, Children’s Best Interest Project, and the James B. Moran Center for Youth Advocacy.

1 https://yclj.org/minimum-age