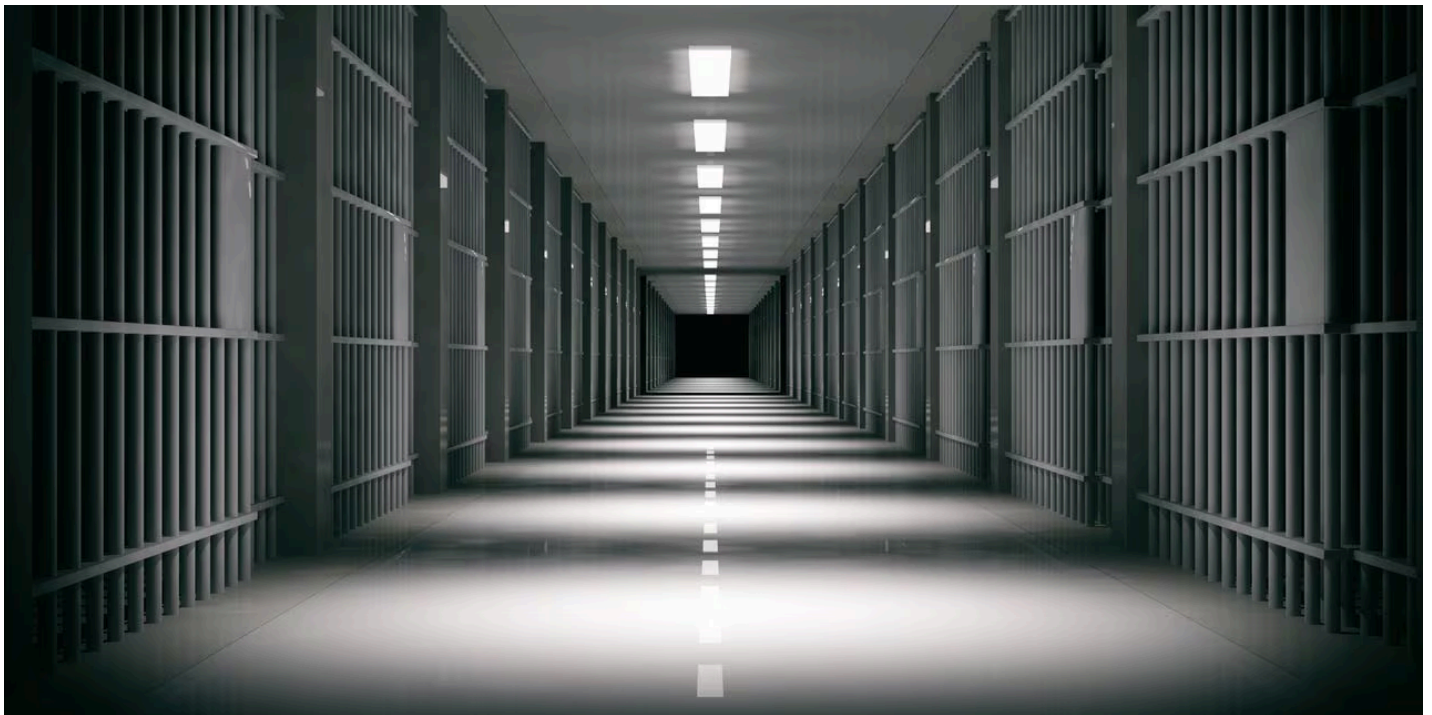


LETTERS

Juvenile justice, criminal justice, and justice for all

Updated May 2, 2024, 2:20 a.m.



ADOBE STOCK

There are many critical reasons why incarcerated youth must receive proper services

The April 29 editorial, [“Special education programs shouldn’t stop at the jailhouse door,”](#) does a good job depicting the failure to provide legally entitled education to youth with disabilities behind the walls and cites the corresponding risk of unemployment, poverty, and homelessness. Massachusetts needs to address this failure because it robs young people of their rights and imperils their future. But beyond such harms is one

other critical reason why it matters: public safety. [Research](#) clearly shows education to be an effective way to reduce recidivism rates. This relates closely to another recent editorial ([“State definition of ‘juvenile offender’ should follow the science,”](#) April 24) supporting pending legislation to raise the age of the juvenile justice system so that most 18- to 20-year-olds can be served there. Does it matter to public safety if young people are served in a system designed to provide developmentally appropriate services and programs, including regular and special-education classes every school day, rather than being neglected (and too often harmed) in the adult criminal legal system? You bet it does.

Lael Chester

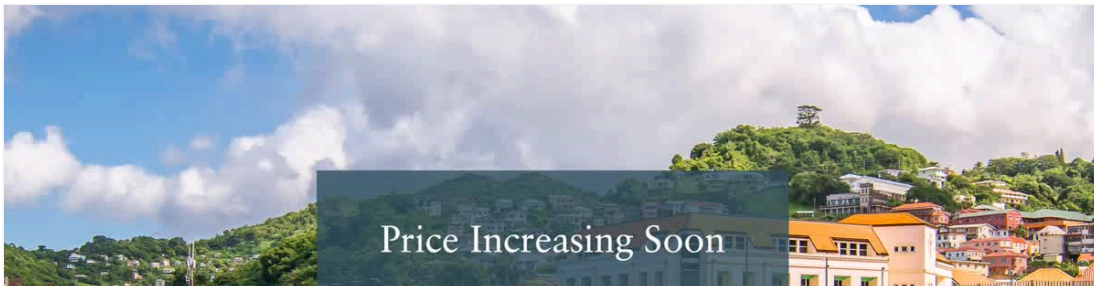
Cambridge

The writer is the director of the Emerging Adult Justice Project at Columbia University.

State’s Raise the Age bill is a smart-on-crime measure

The Boston Globe and Senate President Karen Spilka are spot-on — Massachusetts needs to raise the age at which young offenders are considered adults ([“State definition of ‘juvenile offender’ should follow the science,”](#) Editorial, April 24).

ADVERTISING



Young people are less culpable and need the special expertise of the juvenile court. Both [science](#) and our state's [highest court](#) recognize that the human brain is not fully developed until one's 20s. The law, however, can be a blunt instrument, and the adult criminal justice system is not equipped to address the rehabilitation of teenagers and emerging adults, who need to [complete their education, receive developmentally appropriate supportive treatment and interventions](#), and have access to their families at this critical time in their lives.

Raising the age is smart on crime because it also gives young adults a better chance of being prepared for and accessing what may be their first jobs and career opportunities. These real chances at success would translate into reduced recidivism, promote public safety, help the economy by increasing the pool of eligible workers, and increase tax revenues for the state.

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