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July 21, 2026

Massachusetts State Senate
State House
Boston, MA 02133

Re: Opposition to Amendment 495 to the Economic Development Bill

Dear Members of the Massachusetts Senate,

On behalf of the nearly 400 municipal and campus police chiefs represented by the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association (MCOPA), I respectfully urge your opposition to Senate Amendment 495 to the Economic Development Bill.

This amendment would fundamentally change Massachusetts criminal justice policy by increasing the age of criminal majority from 18 to 19 and making extensive amendments throughout the General Laws affecting juvenile jurisdiction, criminal procedure, probation, Department of Youth Services (DYS) operations, firearms statutes, victim protections, and numerous other provisions of law.

MCOPA has consistently expressed concerns regarding similar legislation, including Senate Bill 1061, An Act to Promote Public Safety and Better Outcomes for Youth, which was reported favorably by the Joint Committee on the Judiciary and is currently pending before the Senate Committee on Ways and Means. While Amendment 495 is more limited than S.1061, which proposed gradually increasing the age of criminal majority to 21, it nevertheless represents a significant change in criminal justice policy with substantial implications for law enforcement, the courts, victims, and the public.

MCOPA supports evidence-based diversion programs, rehabilitation, and opportunities for young offenders to avoid unnecessary criminal convictions. Massachusetts already provides judges and prosecutors with considerable discretion through diversion programs, continuances without a finding, pretrial probation, and other alternatives that balance rehabilitation with accountability. These tools are available today without fundamentally redefining the age of criminal responsibility.

We remain concerned that raising the age of criminal majority creates an inconsistency in Massachusetts law. At age 18, individuals may vote, serve in the military, enter legally binding contracts, serve on juries, and are otherwise recognized as adults with the rights and responsibilities that accompany adulthood. Treating those same individuals as juveniles for purposes of criminal accountability sends conflicting messages about personal responsibility and risks undermining public confidence in the justice system.

The proposal would also have significant operational consequences. Police departments, prosecutors, courts, probation officers, DYS, and correctional agencies would all be required to revise policies, retrain personnel, modify records management systems, and implement new investigative and case processing procedures. These changes would require substantial public investment while their effect on public safety remains uncertain.

The impact on campus and municipal policing is particularly noteworthy. Massachusetts police departments investigate thousands of incidents each year involving 18-year-old college students. Expanding juvenile jurisdiction would introduce additional procedural requirements, limit access to records, complicate investigations, delay victim notification, and create new administrative burdens for law enforcement agencies working to protect our college campuses and communities.

Perhaps most importantly, MCOPA believes legislation of this magnitude deserves full and deliberate legislative review. Amendment 495 is not a technical amendment. It represents a sweeping criminal justice policy change that amends dozens of statutes across the General Laws. Such a proposal should be considered through the normal committee process, with comprehensive testimony from law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, victim advocates, DYS, behavioral health experts, and other stakeholders. It should not be advanced as part of an economic development bill.

MCOPA respectfully urges you to oppose Senate Amendment 495. Should the Legislature wish to continue examining changes to juvenile jurisdiction, we stand ready to participate in a thoughtful, transparent discussion that carefully balances rehabilitation, accountability, victim rights, fiscal responsibility, and public safety.

Thank you for your continued service to the Commonwealth and for your consideration of our views.

The Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association, Inc.

By and through:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael J. Bradley, Jr.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Chief Michael J. Bradley, Jr. (Ret.)

Executive Director

Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association