



Suzanne Salisbury
134 Park Road
Westbrook, ME 04092
Residence: (207) 899-6863
Suzanne.Salisbury@legislature.maine.gov

HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES
2 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002
(207) 287-1400
TTY: MAINE RELAY 711

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Testimony of Rep. Suzanne Salisbury presenting
**LD 1849, An Act to Establish a Minimum Age at Which a Juvenile
May Be Adjudicated**
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Good morning, Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus and esteemed colleagues on the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, I am Sue Salisbury and I represent House District 128, which includes part of Westbrook. I am here today to present **LD 1849, An Act to Establish a Minimum Age at Which a Juvenile May Be Adjudicated**.

In 2024, many of us received the Human Rights for Kids report.¹ Included in that report were state ratings. Out of 12 categories, Maine received four points. The report aims to track “the presence or absence of 12 categories of state statutes that are critical to protecting the human rights of children in the criminal justice system.” One of the areas that Maine did not receive credit was the minimum age for juvenile court. I set out to learn more about juvenile crimes when they are prosecuted and if there were any changes we could make to improve our ratings related to juvenile crimes. I shared the report with Shira Burns from the Maine Prosecutors Association, Assistant District Attorney Tanya Pierson, Secretary of State Shenna Bellows, Christine Thibeault from DOC and members of CLAC.

Under Maine law, there is no minimum age for bringing charges against a juvenile. The report recommended a minimum age of 10, and after many discussions, we settled on 11, except for murder, felony murder and manslaughter. The bill defines a juvenile as someone “who has attained 11 years of age but not attained 18 years of age at the time the person allegedly commits any juvenile crime...”

The other changes included in this bill include the removal of two sections under the definitions. One area is offenses related to hunting, operation or attempted operation of a watercraft, ATV or snowmobile while intoxicated, and the other is operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of intoxicating liquor or drugs.

¹ <https://humanrightsforkids.org/publication/maine-state-ratings-report/>

I hope this bill is another step in the right direction of building on the improvements we have made in our juvenile justice system in Maine.

Thank you all for your consideration. I also want to thank all the stakeholders who helped me with this bill. I will attempt to answer any questions you may have, but I know there are a few stakeholders here today who will happily answer questions about the bill.