Group wants to raise the age of criminal responsibility in New York

by MATTHEW D’ONOFRIO

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Advocates for raising the age of criminal responsibility spoke out in Albany Tuesday to push for reforms they say would improve the chances of success for New York’s youth.

At a press conference in the legislative Office Building, Dr. Megan Kurlychek from SUNY Albany School of Criminal Justice, shared results from an experiment with the Judicial Branch of Connecticut that proves raising the age is beneficial to youth.

In Connecticut, 42 percent of all 16-year-olds arrested in 2009, when still processed as adults, were arrested for new offenses within two years. After reforms were passed in 2010 to raise the age of criminal responsibility, only 26 were arrested for new offenses within two years.

Albany County Sheriff Craig Apple said he had ten juveniles sitting in his correctional facility as of Tuesday morning. When he asked each of these juveniles “Why are you here,” they responded, “I don’t know.”

“When these kids come to jail it’s a city within city, they’re lost, and they have no idea. Their chances of completing school, and as a result of that conviction, their chances of getting a job are now diminished,” Apple said.

New York and North Carolina are currently the only states that automatically prosecute all 16- and 17-year-olds as adults.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo proposed legislation this session to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 17 years old in 2017 and then 18 years old in 2018.