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Chairman Lang, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Leland and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee,

I am Linda Tucci Teodosio and I have served as a Judge in the Summit County Juvenile Court since January 2003. I have implemented numerous programs that focus on treatment to assist youth in rehabilitation using evidence-based practices. In this way, we are able to recover young lives and protect the safety of the community. I am providing this proponent testimony as an individual and not as a representative of any group.

I would like to present written testimony in support of the provisions of SB 256 that would eliminate life without parole (LWOP) for individuals who are sentenced for offenses committed prior to the age of 18 years old.

I would first like to testify in support of eliminating LWOP for sex offenses committed prior to the age of 18. Due the nature of the offense, the amount of time that is needed to complete sex-offender treatment and the law as it relates to transfer to the General Division for a youth to be tried as an adult, LWOP presents particular problems. First, we have learned that evidence-based treatment for youth who have committed sexual offenses is very effective and results in a low recidivism rates for these youth. Evidence-based treatment requires an extensive period of treatment and supervision and most youth require 18 months or more to complete treatment. Many of these youth disclose their own victimization during the course of treatment. If successful, these youth learn the tools for a healthy and productive lives. During the time I have been on the bench, I have had the experience of handling at least four cases where an allegation of rape is made by way of a disclosure that is removed in time for the offense by several years. Offenses alleged to have been committed when the youth was 14 or 15 years old is not reported until the individual is 20 years old. Because of the age of the youth at the time the charge is brought and the length of time required for successful treatment, the Juvenile Court finds itself in a position where the case must be transferred to the General Division because treatment cannot be completed prior to the individual's 21st birthday. This could conceivably result in a sentence of life without parole for an offense that was committed at age 14.

Additionally, brain science would support the elimination of LWOP for offenses committed by an individual while under the age of 18. We now know that the human brain does not fully

develop until as late age 26 years, according to studies. The portion of the brain that is the last to develop holds the executive functions of the ability to make reasoned decisions and fully explore consequences before acting. With maturity and development, an individual can learn to change criminogenic thinking patterns and become a productive member of society. LWOP eliminates the possibility for individuals who have truly learned from their mistakes and have rehabilitated themselves from becoming productive members of society.

I full acknowledge that there are individuals that present a serious and ongoing risk to the safety of our community. Despite treatment and maturity, they may never reach a level where they can safely be reintegrated into our community. These dangerous individuals may need to remain incarcerated for the term of their life but the fact that they exist should not prevent those who can safely return to society from doing so. Eliminating LWOP for offenses committed by individuals under age 18 does not prevent these individuals from being held. Instead, it offers hope for those who can do what is necessary to lead a productive life.