

Columbus Office

Vern Riffe Center  
77 S. High Street  
10th Floor  
Columbus, Ohio 43215-6111  
(614) 644-6037  
(800) 282-0253  
(614) 719-0000 (Fax)  
[Rep35@ohiohouse.gov](mailto:Rep35@ohiohouse.gov)  
[www.ohiohouse.gov](http://www.ohiohouse.gov)

Civil Justice  
Criminal Justice  
Higher Education  
Co-Chair, Criminal Sentencing  
Subcommittee

**Tavia Galonski**  
State Representative

Chairman Lang, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Leland, and my colleagues on the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for letting me provide testimony today on House Bill 552. This legislation would bar against a life sentence without parole, and special parole dates, for offenders who committed the offense when under the age of 18.

Before going into the details of HB 552 I would like to note that its companion legislation, Senate Bill 256, passed the Senate back in September with a vote of 29-4.

House Bill 552 ensures that youth are given a second chance in our justice system. Juveniles differ from adults from a brain development standpoint that ultimately impacts a juvenile's culpability. Yet we are still treating both groups as if they have the same cognitive reasoning. HB 552 allows for our justice system to focus on rehabilitation for some of our most vulnerable and easily influenced. Special parole eligibility dates would be provided for juveniles who are serving a prison sentence for an offense other than the Aggravated Homicide Offense (defined as the offender killing three or more victims). Also, juveniles who are serving consecutive prison sentence for multiple offense would be eligible so long as none of them are The Aggravated Homicide Offense. As outlined, there would be a parole review after 25 years for homicide offenses and parole review after 18 years for non-homicide offenses.

The Parole Board would also use the following five criteria during the review process in addition to other factors:

- 1.) The prisoner's age and that age's features such as level of maturity, intellectual capacity, and understanding of risks and consequences
- 2.) Their family and home environment at the time of offense and their history of trauma
- 3.) The circumstances surrounding the offense such as their participation in the conduct and any possible pressures that may have impacted their conduct
- 4.) If the prisoner might have been charged and convicted of a lesser offense if not for the youthful incompetencies surrounding the ability to work with police officers and prosecutors or their ability to assist their own attorney
- 5.) Any growth or increase in maturity during confinement

Due to House Bill 552's rehabilitative nature while also still ensuring justice is being done, this is a meaningful step towards criminal justice reform. Thank you and I am happy to answer any questions from the committee.