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Chairman Eklund, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 256.

This bill will bring Ohio in line with a number of Ohio Supreme Court and U.S. Supreme Court rulings. Following several landmark cases during the past decade, twenty two other states have taken steps to comply with the ruling that declared it unconstitutional for a child be given a sentence of life without parole.

This language will accomplish the following:

1)      Abolishes the sentence of Juvenile Life Without the Possibility of Parole

2)      Requires sentencing courts to consider youth and its characteristics at sentencing – we used SCOTUS language straight out of Miller v. Alabama, 567 U.S. 460 (2012).

3)      Provides parole eligibility for juveniles sentenced as adults, except those who committed an Aggravated Homicide Offense (principal offender in the killing of three or more victims)

a.       Parole review after 25 years for homicide offenses

b.      Parole review after 18 years for non-homicide offenses

4)      Specifies that the parole board can flop juveniles sentenced as adults for review for no more than five years

5)      Specifies that the parole board must consider the Miller factors during the parole hearing

Legislation substantively similar to Senate Bill 256 has been introduced in past General Assemblies. I sponsored House Bill 521 during the 131st General Assembly (Chair Eklund had companion legislation at that time), HB 521 passed the House 92-4 in May of 2016. My joint-sponsor and I have been working closely with a number of entities, including the Ohio Public Defender and the Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth to ensure that the language we bring to you today is reasonable and irons out some of the issues that contributed to difficulty in passage in the past.

It is important to note that the possibility of parole does not guarantee release, and that this bill *is* retroactive. Please note in addition, that in the case of an aggravated homicide, an offender still would *not* be eligible for parole after serving 25 years, and could still be given a life-long prison sentence.

Again, thank you, Chairman and members of the committee for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on this important piece of legislation. I will take any questions at this time.