

February 17, 2020

Re: Senate Bill 256

Dear Mr. Eklund and fellow Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my thoughts on Senate Bill 256 regarding juvenile sentences.

In 2014 I began volunteering at a correctional facility in Ohio. I am 22 years old, I have Cerebral Palsy and use a power wheelchair for mobility. I participate in adaptive sports on a power wheelchair soccer team. It is through this organization I first had the opportunity to speak to inmates. We did a presentation about adaptive sports. The first time I was very nervous because I did not know how the inmates would react to me or what it was going to be like. After that first visit, my family started volunteering at the prison, helping another volunteer with classes and teaching the inmates about family dynamics and just sharing my life with them.

During these visits, I really got to know a few of the inmates. One individual, Chris, and I had a real connection. I felt that he could relate to me because at the time we met, I was the age he was when he was incarcerated. He sincerely cared for me, the choices I make and the other members on my soccer team. One time, we took wheelchairs into the prison and played a game against the staff. It was during this game Chris had played for part of the game. He told me that when he got up out the wheelchair at the end of the game, realizing I could not, that it really impacted him. He also is 'confined' but because of choices he himself had made. I, on the other hand, had no choice to be confined to a wheelchair. Yet I still have a great outlook on life and was continuing to reach out to others. I don't know who was more impacted by our visits there, me or the inmates.

During my volunteer visits at the prison, I came to know Chris very well. He was incarcerated as a juvenile. He recognizes and is remorseful of his crime. He continues to serve his term after 25 plus years. He has taken college courses, earning his associates and bachelor's degree. He taught himself to airbrush and has painted numerous murals for the different units he has stayed in, administrative offices and outside projects when allowed. I believe he is sincerely sorry for his crimes and would do good in the community if released.

This is why I am writing about SB 256. I don't believe juveniles should receive life without parole. I wish the parole board could take more time when considering someones future. I am in full support of SB 256. Thank you for your consideration on this matter.

Sincerely,

Vincent Lane