

Good morning Chairman Eklund and members of the Committee.

I am eager to share my story as it relates to Senate Bill 256.

I believe all children sent to adult prison should have the opportunity to demonstrate to the parole board and to their community that they are ready to be granted parole and be re-integrated back into society.

I offer this support 29 years after my dear friend and someone who I considered as my Spiritual mother was stabbed to death by her 16 year old son Johnny during the course of an argument. Shortly afterwards Johnny stabbed me several times. Fortunately, I survived the knife attack.

In August 2011, I discovered that Johnny was eligible for a parole hearing. I had always wanted to talk with him about why he killed his mother and why without provocation did he stab me. After reaching out to him he admitted to me that because of the nature of his case that I was the last person he would expect to come to the prison to talk with him.

After speaking with him and learning what happened that morning that he killed his mother, he cried more than I did. I found him to be remorseful and accountable for his actions, not the monster I expected him to be and I wasn't the angry victim he expected me to be. So neither of us were what the other one expected.

During Johnny's almost 30 years of incarceration he has obtained his barber's license and has taken the classes the parole board required him to take. At this point in his life he has been to the parole board 12 times. No effort on his part alone seemed to matter. His efforts alone were never good enough.

In my ignorance I thought that with me being Johnny's victim and speaking to the parole board on his behalf it would make a difference to the board. But I have found that my voice didn't matter. Hopefully my voice will matter with you today.

Senate Bill 256 doesn't guarantee a release, it only gives them a chance to demonstrate that they are accountable for the harm that they have caused and that they have made an intentional and conscious change.

It has been my honor to speak with you today regarding Senate Bill 256. Thank you.