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Testimony in Support of SB 272
Under 18 / Indefinite Life Sentence / Special Parole Eligibility
Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Greetings Chairman Coley, Vice Chairman Seitz, Ranking Board Member Yuko, and honorable members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee. My name is Ronald D. Simpson-Bey and I thank you for allowing and considering my testimony in support of SB 272.

On Father's Day 2001 I was waiting for a visit from my son and three daughters. The visit never happened because my son, who was 21-years old at the time, was shot and killed by a 14-year old juvenile. Despite this, my son's mother and I did not want our son's killer to spend the rest of his life in prison. We don't believe in the concept of an eye for an eye.

We recognize that even though he committed a horrible crime, the boy who killed our son was still a child. We wanted him to be processed in the juvenile system, which was set up specifically for children. We wanted him tried there and held there after his conviction to prepare him for release.

Research has proven what many parents already know: Children are still developing and possess tremendous capacity for change. We also know that they do not have the same capacity as adults to resist pressure from peers and adults, think through the long-term consequences of their actions or remove themselves from dangerous situations.

The child who killed my son is now a young man. He has grown into a productive man all because he had a second chance, which is all that any of us could want. Together, we can be sure that more young people get the chance they need and deserve.

We don't make our communities safe by creating artificial lines between "victims" and "offenders." That's why I advocated for fair treatment for the teen who killed my son, and why we must insist on healing the harms suffered by both sides of the crime in order to heal our communities. Please lend your support in the passage of SB 272 and let's put the humanity back into being human.