

December 1, 2020

To: House Criminal Justice Committee

Chairman Lang, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee,

I am writing in support of SB256. Children who have been incarcerated and sentenced to life without parole deserve a second chance to be members of society. It is proven through numerous studies that the brain of a child and teen are not fully mature until at least the age of 25. Many medical professionals take claim to this such as the University of Rochester Medical Center:

“It doesn’t matter how smart teens are or how well they scored on the SAT or ACT. Good judgment isn’t something they can excel in, at least not yet.

The rational part of a teen’s brain isn’t fully developed and won’t be until age 25 or so.

In fact, recent research has found that adult and teen brains work differently. Adults think with the prefrontal cortex, the brain’s rational part. This is the part of the brain that responds to situations with good judgment and an awareness of long-term consequences. Teens process information with the amygdala. This is the emotional part.

In teen’s brains, the connections between the emotional part of the brain and the decision-making center are still developing—and not always at the same rate. That’s why when teens have overwhelming emotional input, they can’t explain later what they were thinking. They weren’t thinking as much as they were feeling.”

(Medical Reviewers: Anne Fetterman RN BSN, Joseph Campellone MD, Raymond Kent Turley BSN MSN RN)

Teens are capable of making bad decisions, some even to the point of committing a crime and becoming incarcerated, but they also have the full capability of maturing, learning from their mistakes, and controlling their emotions as they become adults. These individuals deserve a second chance to prove that they will be law abiding citizens, making mature decisions, and contributing to society.

My brother has been incarcerated for 21 years, since the age of 17. I have kept in contact with him and have visited him the entire time he has been incarcerated. He has taken full advantage of what the state has offered him in terms of bettering his character, personality, and education. I have watched him grow from an immature 17-year-old to a very mature 39 year old. He has chosen to surround himself with good

people while incarcerated by wanting to better himself. He has always worked and chose to get educated in the field of plumbing and heating and cooling. His goal has always been to gain enough knowledge to be employable when he comes home. He wants nothing more than to be a good citizen in society and live the American Dream by working and providing for himself and his family. I know he will achieve these goals and be an asset to society. He deserves a second chance in life.

Michael has matured and now understands there are consequences for every wrong action, big or small. He has accepted his punishment for his crime and has used this time to better himself and change. Michael has expressed to me that he wants to help others avoid making the same mistakes he has made in the past.

Michael deserves a second chance so he can start a life of giving back to society.

All juveniles who have been sentenced as adults to life without parole deserve a second chance in life.

Passing SB256 will give these juveniles hope and goals to work toward earning their freedom.

Thank you for your time and reading my message about Michael, my brother, and all juveniles sentenced to life without parole.

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