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Testimony in Support of SB 256
Regards Sentencing Offenders Under 18 When Committed Offense

Good morning Chairman Eklund, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Judiciary Committee. I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify in support of SB 256.

My name is Veronica DePould, and I am here today to tell you about my son Michael. Michael was a teenager when he committed his crime and was tried as an adult. At the age of 17 he was sentenced to 18 years to life. In 2017, Michael went up for parole after serving 18 years. He was told to come back ten years later. He worked for months preparing for this hearing, but wasn't given a chance to say much. SB 256 gives me hope that my son could see the parole board again sooner and that the parole board would take several mitigating factors into account when judging Michael.

My son was angry as a child, but he is not that child anymore. Through growth, maturity, and the many classes offered to him while incarcerated, he has become a well-rounded adult. He has used his time in prison to accomplish many things that will help him be a productive citizen upon his release. He has not sat idle. In fact, there is not a program that has been offered to him that he didn't take to rehabilitate himself. He is an active participant in the dog program at his prison, and he also learned plumbing skills, and studied H.V.A.C.R., so when he comes home, he will be able to make a living for himself. Michael would also be able to spend quality time with his daughter, who was born while he was incarcerated. So far, they have only seen each other behind prison doors. I would love to see them together at home.

I am not only here to speak in my son's behalf. I am a firm believer that teenagers that were sentenced as adults should be given a second chance. Many of them have turned their lives around. If SB 256 passes and becomes law, these men and women would have a chance to show the parole board that they deserve to come home. Please give them that chance.