



Tamara K Echols  
Understand Before you Judge  
3267 Oaklawn Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43224  
(614) 530-3119

Proponent Testimony SB 256  
Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee  
February 19, 2020

Chairman Eklund, Ranking Member Thomas and members of the Judiciary Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you on my support of SB 256.

The SB 256 is very important to me due to my advocacy work for Juveniles tried as adults. I have worked with at Risk Juveniles in the Linden area of Columbus, Ohio as a volunteer over the years. I have personal experience with juveniles tried as adults. This subject has become a regular topic in recent years.

The ruling of the US Supreme Court in Miller vs. Alabama, 567 U.S. 460 (2012) (1) said that mandatory sentences of life without the possibility of parole are unconstitutional. In the 2017 ruling in Montgomery v. Louisiana (2), the U.S. Supreme Court invalidated all existing Juvenile Life without the opportunity of parole. These rulings have to this hot topic of Juvenile Justice Reform.

Robert Sapolsky, a neurobiologist, holds a degree from Harvard and Rockefeller University. He is the author of the book, **Behave: The Biology of Humans at Our Best and Worst**. He states in his podcast on bigthink.com that the frontal cortex of the human brain is the last part of the brain to fully mature. This does not happen until around the age of 25 years or so. (3)

The immaturity of the prefrontal cortex of the brain initiates a variety of behaviors in teens. This area of the brain is involved with the executive functions. These include the following:

- Complete decision making
- Planning Skills
- Impulse control

- Emotional reactions
- Focusing attention
- Prioritizing competing information received all at once
- The ability to ignore external distractions (6)

The lack of these skills can lead to risky and emotional behavior in a teen. This can lead to self-destruction and dangerous risk-taking such as fighting, bullying, unsafe sex, alcohol and substance abuse, unsafe driving, and poor self-care. Unlike an older adult in their late 20's, teens are unable to see the future consequences of their actions. The lack of executive functions can lead to violent behavior. (6)

For these reasons, I am in full support of SB 256.

Respectfully Submitted,



Tamara K. Echols

Understand Before Judge

1. Miller v. Alabama, 132 S. Ct.4255(2012)
2. 577 U.S. \_\_\_\_2016 (2016)
3. Big.think.com Sapolsky, Robert [The teenage brain: Why some years are \(a lot\) crazier than others](#)
4. Urmc.rochester.edu [Understanding The Teen Brain](#)
5. Raisingchildren.net [Brain development: teenagers](#)
6. Newportacademy.com [The Facts About Teen Brain Development](#)