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Chairman Lang, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Sub Senate Bill 256.

The bill accomplishes the following:

- Abolishes the sentence of life without parole for juveniles
- Provides parole eligibility for juveniles sentenced as adults, except those who committed an Aggravated Homicide Offense (principal offender in the killing of three or more victims)
  - Parole review after 25 years for homicide offenses
  - Parole review after 18 years for non-homicide offenses
- Requires sentencing courts to consider youth and its characteristics at sentencing – we used SCOTUS language straight out of *Miller v. Alabama*, 567 U.S. 460 (2012).
- Specifies that the parole board can flop juveniles sentenced as adults for review for no more than five years
- Specifies that the parole board must consider the *Miller* factors during the parole hearing

Both the Ohio and the U.S. Supreme Court have ruled that, a juvenile offender *may not* receive a life sentence, or a sentence that exceeds their lifetime for a non-homicide offense. Thus, a juvenile cannot be sentenced to life without parole or to enough years to equal a life sentence for non-homicide. Then for homicide offenses, juvenile cannot receive mandatory life without parole due to their diminished culpability and heightened capacity for change. Once again, this does not guarantee release from prison, it simply provides a hearing for offenders after serving 18 or 25 years, respectively.

Legislation substantively similar to Senate Bill 256 has been introduced in past General Assemblies. I sponsored House Bill 521 during the 131<sup>st</sup> General Assembly (Chair Eklund had companion legislation at that time), HB 521 passed the House 92-4 in May of 2016. My joint-sponsor and I have been working closely with a number of entities, including the Ohio Public Defender and the Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth to ensure that the language we bring to you today is reasonable and irons out some of the issues that contributed to difficulty in passage in the past.

It is important to note that the bill includes exceptions for those who are convicted of three or more murders, or those convicted of terrorism when the most serious underlying offense is murder or aggravated murder. Thus, in the case of an aggravated homicide or that type of terrorism offense, an offender would still be *ineligible* for parole after serving 25 years, and could still be given a life-long prison sentence.

Thank you, Chairman and members of the committee for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on this important piece of legislation. I will take questions at this time.