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Testimony in Support of SB 256

Regards Sentencing Offenders Under 18 When Committed Offense
House Criminal Justice Committee

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

My name is Frank Offenburger, I am 35 years old, and I am a CDL truck driver for Shackelford's Disposal Services. I have been working for Shackelford's Disposal for eleven months, and started this job two weeks after my release from prison. I was incarcerated in the ODRC for a total of nine and a half years.

I was misguided in a lot of my thinking and spent a large part of my life chasing an addiction. That addiction took me to the deepest and darkest areas of my life. I caught a felonious assault on an officer, and a possession charge during a police standoff. I was under the influence of methamphetamines. I lost a lot during my incarceration.

However, I also gained the understanding that if you don't like your situation, then you need to change it. While in prison, I got into the 4Paws for Ability dog training program. 4Paws teaches you to train service dogs for veterans and children with disabilities. It was through 4Paws that I met a juvenile lifer who used to get called 'Pup'. Pretty fitting considering we worked together in a dog program. However, he really got his nickname, because he went to prison at a very young age. He was 16 when he got locked up on a life sentence.

He was my 'bunkmate' and we got along extremely well, because we were like-minded. I say like-minded, because we were set apart from our peers that were still doing the same things that landed them in prison. He and I were focused on our family relationships and improving the lives of others. And while I had to be the one wanting to change my life around, without him, I don't think I would have been able to make all of the progress that I made.

Because of the changes that I made, and through the help of Pup, I was able to meet like-minded, pro-social people, and I was able to get into other programs that made an impact on my life. I was able to get clean on October 8th 2017, one of my biggest accomplishments. Since then, things really started coming together for me. I was given the opportunity to get into the CDL program at Grafton Correctional Institution. I took the opportunity and made the best I could out of it. I have been out of prison for almost a year now, and I have more now than what I lost before, most of all I have a life and a deep bond with my family and kids!

When people say that criminal minded people can't change, I believe that is non-sense. Don't get me wrong, I have met some terrible people during my incarceration, but I have also met some of the best. Prison is a revolving door for many, but I firmly believe that Pup would take full advantage of any opportunity that was given to him and he would make the absolute most of his freedom. He has made mistakes like all of us have, but he should not be defined by them. I believe he should be defined by what he is doing for the larger part of his life.

This goes for all of the juveniles in this situation. I believe there is a lot of potential being thrown away in our prison system, because people believe that juvenile lifers can't change. Pup is one of those people, and although he has little hope to go home one day, that man spends a lot of his time mentoring to those that *do* have a chance to go home! That is just who Pup is today, a selfless person who would rather see the next man do good. Let's give him and so many others like him a chance to prove themselves. Please vote yes on SB 256.