

February 16, 2020

Re: Senate Bill 256

Mr. Eklund and fellow Committee Members:

I am writing in support of SB 256. I fully believe a juvenile should be given more consideration when sentencing and parole are being decided. Having raised three sons of my own, I cannot imagine one of them being sentenced as a juvenile to life in prison. The rational part of a teens brain is not fully developed before the age of approximately 25. Do I think they should be excused from all mistakes or crimes? Absolutely not! But I do believe more consideration should be taken for their actions. I am sure they do not fully realize the impact of every decision they make. I recall many things I did myself as a teenager that could've had a very unfortunate outcome. That doesn't mean I am still that person, I have grown and changed over the years. I wonder what it is like to grow up inside of prison.

I have done some volunteering in a correctional facility in Northeast Ohio. It was during this time that I got to know several inmates, listening to their stories and sharing my life with them as well. One individual I met, Chris, was incarcerated at the age of 16, he is currently serving 25 plus years. I do believe more time and details could be taken into account when considering parole. Chris has earned his Associates and Bachelors degrees, organized and helped run a charity group, giving back to the community. He has taught himself to do airbrush painting and has created several murals throughout the facilities he has stayed in, as well as painting for outside non profit organizations. After 25 plus years, Chris continues to keep a good outlook on life, thinking of how he could give back when he is released. Chris also takes full responsibility for his actions and shows great remorse.

When thinking of Bill 256, I believe this is a chance to improve upon our justice system. Please take a moment to put yourself, your loved one, in a similar scenario. If I have learned anything throughout my 50 years of life, I have learned, not all things are black and white. We need to take time to ponder the details and give everyone a little grace. Thank you for hearing my heart on this matter and for your consideration.

Best regards,

Sandra J. Lane