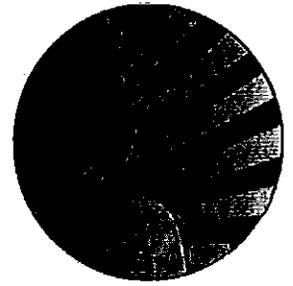


# the CAMPAIGN for the FAIR SENTENCING of YOUTH



Judiciary Committee  
March 23, 2012

H.B. No. 5546, An Act Concerning Sentence Modification for Juveniles

Dear Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

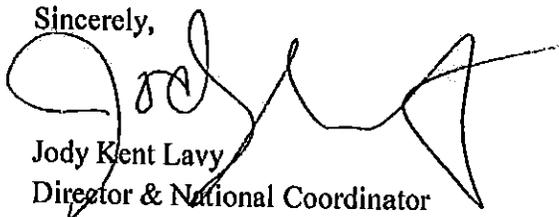
The Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth submits this testimony regarding H.B. No. 5546, An Act Concerning Sentence Modification for Juveniles. The Campaign is a national coalition of advocates, lawyers, doctors, families, academics, and murder victim family members all working to end the practice of sentencing youth to life without the possibility of parole.

H.B. No. 5546 is an important first step in ensuring that all youth are held accountable for their actions in an age-appropriate manner. As the Committee reviews possible "second look" provisions for youth serving lengthy prison sentences, we urge lawmakers to consider well-established scientific evidence that proves the fundamental differences between youth and adults. Recent research shows that children do not have adult levels of judgment, impulse control, or ability assess risks, and we know that they are more susceptible than adults to negative influences and outside pressures, including peer pressure. These relevant factors, including the unique potential that youth have for change and rehabilitation, demonstrate the importance of providing youth convicted of serious crimes meaningful and frequent sentencing reviews after a portion of their time has been served.

The Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth supports H.B. No. 5546 because it is the first step in setting the groundwork for sound public policy that promotes accountability and keeps communities safe. Meaningful "second look" provisions do not allow for the pre-mature release of inmates serving time in prison for serious offenses. Instead, they ensure that youth convicted of serious crimes have the chance to work toward release if they can prove, later in life, they have been rehabilitated.

We appreciate the Committee's attention on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Jody Kent Lavy  
Director & National Coordinator