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Statement to the members of the
Connecticut Joint Committee on Judiciary
by Alexander Emmons
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Testifying in favor of SB- No. 1062 and H.B. No. 6581

My name is Alexander Emmons. I am an undergraduate at Yale University, and an advocate for Amnesty International, USA. I am representing the voices of the five thousand dues-paying Amnesty International Members in the state of Connecticut.

Last year, Amnesty International joined a coalition of groups fighting to abolish the Death Penalty in Connecticut. This year, SB-1035 provides another opportunity for Connecticut to advance Human Rights. Amnesty International, as well as Human Rights Watch, and the ACLU have all published reports arguing for changes to juvenile sentencing practices across the country.

There are currently 9 prisoners in Connecticut serving life sentences without parole for crimes they committed as minors. The International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) both argue against this practice, affirming the restorative role of the justice system. Any justice system that mandates life in prison as a sentence for minors is a violation of human dignity. Sentencing a minor to life without parole is a denial that a minor can ever grow into a different adult.

In its sentencing requirements, America is unique among developed Democracies. Most European nations have maximum sentences for minors under 15 years, and have lower crime rates. There is even already precedent in American law for sentencing requirements on minors to be made more lenient. In 2010 the Supreme Court, in *Graham v Florida*, ruled that life without parole sentences for minors is cruel in non-homicide cases. Connecticut should follow suite by recognizing such sentences are cruel and unusual.

Sentencing minors for life without parole does not make our society more secure. It does not deter crime. It only denies that a minor can change as they mature, and that is an act of cruelty.