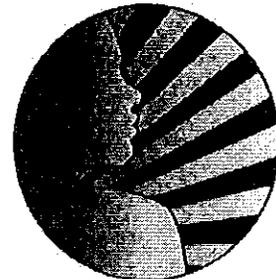


# *the* CAMPAIGN *for the* FAIR SENTENCING *of* YOUTH



Testimony in Support of SB 1062 and HB 6581

Judiciary Committee, Connecticut General Assembly  
Legislative Office Building  
300 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, CT 06115

March 11, 2013

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee:

The Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth submits this testimony in support of legislation to provide a “second look” at long sentences imposed on youth. The Campaign is a national coalition of advocates, lawyers, doctors, families, academics, and murder victim family members all working to tend the practice of sentencing youth to life without the possibility of parole.

We urge the Connecticut General Assembly to enact legislation allowing a person sentenced to a lengthy term of imprisonment for a crime committed under the age of eighteen to seek release under parole supervision after serving a portion of the sentence. Such legislation will help ensure that all youth are held accountable for their actions in an age-appropriate manner.

As the Judiciary Committee considers the proposed bills, we urge members to consider the 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 to assess risks, and we know that they are more susceptible than adults to negative influences and outside pressures, including peer pressure. This scientific evidence illustrates the fact that “juveniles have lessened culpability,” which, according to the Supreme Court, means that “they are less deserving of the most severe punishments.” In fact, the Supreme Court has determined – three times in the last seven years – that youth must be treated differently than adults because they have a unique potential for change and rehabilitation. These decisions underscore the importance of providing youth convicted of serious crimes meaningful and frequent sentencing reviews after a portion of their time is served.

SB 1062 recognizes this capacity in youth, eliminating life without parole sentences for juveniles and allowing judges to consider youth-related factors in sentencing juveniles transferred to adult court. HB 6581 would further achieve this objective by affording youth serving sixty years or less parole eligibility after one-half of their sentence or ten years, whichever is longer, and those serving sentences of more than 60 years parole eligibility after serving 30 years. This legislation

would not guarantee release, but rather would give juvenile offenders serving lengthy sentences the opportunity to show they have grown, matured, worked diligently to change their ways, and made amends for their mistakes.

The Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth supports sound public policy that promotes accountability and keeps communities safe through the recognition of fundamental differences between youth and adults. Meaningful "second look" provisions do not allow for the premature release of inmates serving time in prison for serious offenses. Instead, they ensure that youth convicted of serious crimes have the chance to work towards release if they can prove, later in life, that they have been rehabilitated.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jody Kent Lavy". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Jody Kent Lavy  
Director & National Coordinator  
Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth