

Hello! My name is Julian Cupe and I currently reside in a work release program in New Haven Connecticut. I am writing this letter in regards to my support of House Bill #5221. I am in full support of this bill because I was one of those juveniles in Connecticut that was charged and sentenced as an adult. In June 1997, I was arrested and later convicted of 1st Degree Manslaughter. I just turned 15 years old and was sentenced to more time than I've been alive (20 years). I was just released 3 weeks ago after serving 17 years so I personally lived through all the thoughts, feelings, theories, curiosities, and discussions pertaining to this bill.

Throughout my 17 years of incarceration, I've grown and matured tremendously. My growth and maturity didn't come from birthdays passing and getting older age wise. It came through experiencing things good and bad, learning, hardwork, effort, determination, dedication, and simply just wanting better for myself. I could still remember when I was sitting in a cell and made a conscious decision that I wanted to attend school so I could graduate at the same age I would have graduated if I was home. When I turned 18, I reached my goal and graduated. The joy that came with that accomplishment was priceless to me and it gave me a drive to keep striving for more, so I did. I took Vocational classes and successfully completed both. Now I am certified in Commerical Cleaning and Culinary Arts. I continued on surrounding myself by positive people and I took advantage of all the programs offered, to make me more well rounded as a person. Some of those programs were

Voices, Anger Management, Bridges of Freedom, Re-entry, Violence Prevention, Thinking for a Change, Motivation and Self-Mastery and People Empowering People. This was a pivotal point for me, transforming myself from a misguided teen into a responsible grown man. I began to see and understand things different which allowed me to communicate better and react to things different. This created opportunities for me to give back, so I took advantage of them and started tutoring and working Hospice. The feeling that came with helping others better themselves and achieve their personal goals was nothing I ever felt before. It was very rewarding though. That's why I am currently pursuing a career in counseling so I could help educate and inform (mentor) teens that's walking the same path I use to walk. I understand the importance of having a strong support system. That's what helped me get through that 17 years I served and their the ones who is making this transition a little easier.

I would like to thank everyone who read my story. Hopefully it inspired you that it's possible for people to change. Maybe not everybody but I'm a living example that if given a second chance there's hope to redeem yourself and become a productive member of society. All some people need is that chance.