

## DOUGLAS HOOD

To: Committee Members

For SB 796

I'll tell you a story.

In 1996 two kids were at a party. A boy 16 and a girl 14. She was homeless, her mom had died of AIDS and her dad was in and out of jail. They needed money, decided to rob a cab. One got a knife. When they got in the cab a scuffle ensued and the driver was dead from a stab wound.

The police report never gave the details. No matter.

The girl's father told her to tell the cops everything—that she would fall under the juvenile system. But she was treated as an adult, with no lawyer signed a confession. We never knew who was the major participant. Both teens were convicted of a felony murder and got 50 years. Even a jury member said they had no idea that would be the sentence. In her Presentence Investigation they said she was likely to be end up in jail anyway.

This didn't happen in Somalia. No, here in the US. In fact, right here in Hartford.

Has the system brutalized her? Of course.

Three times she attempted suicide and many more times landed in solitary.

Despite being a seventh grade dropout she has taken courses at Wesleyan University. She has written poems and stories and been published and won awards. She has emerged as a strong woman that looks to a future even though she has none.

Her dad, once the most wanted man in CT, a career criminal, an addict, has turned his life around. He says she is the reason she's in jail. For ten years he's worked for a volunteer Veterans group rescuing the homeless and addicts and puts them on the right track. Every week he drives down from Pittsfield, Mass to see his daughter. Every week. His only mission is to be standing at the gate when she gets out.

That's not likely. He's 62. And she's got more than 30 years to go. No matter what she does she cannot change that fact. Think of it. Her first chance in life—when she's not doomed by a missing criminal family with no home or behind bars—will be when she's 64.

Please pass SB 796.

Douglas Hood