



Testimony of Patrick Sullivan  
Co-Director of Advocacy & Awareness  
Yale Undergraduate Prison Project

March 22, 2015  
68 High St, B 21  
New Haven, CT 06511

In favor: S.B No. 00018  
An Act Concerning A Second Chance Society

Senator Coleman, Representative Tong, and members of the Judiciary Committee: my name is Patrick Sullivan, Co-Director of Advocacy and Awareness with the Yale Undergraduate Prison Project, a group of Yale undergraduates dedicated to reducing recidivism and working to reform criminal justice policies at the local, state and national level.

We urge the committee to pass Senate Bill 18. This proposal, essential to reforming the policies surrounding Connecticut's criminal justice system, recognizes the outdated nature of the states policy with regards to scientific knowledge about juvenile behavior. Furthermore, the bill would implement a series of evidence-based practices that empower youth to change rather than punishing them unnecessarily. Senate Bill 18 not only implements common sense initiatives that will profoundly effect the children in the criminal justice system, but it also provides for safer communities and more equitable systems of justice.

In my work with the Yale Undergraduate Prison Project, I mentor and tutor young men my age at the Manson Youth Correctional Institution in Cheshire, CT. For a few months, I worked with a young man who was sentenced, as a nineteen year old, to one year in prison. In our conversations, I would ask him a few questions to get the discussion going or ask him to clarify something or expand on a thought. Most of the time, I wasn't sure which way the mentoring was going. We spoke about his goals for when he returns to school. We spoke about his plans for participating in his community at home through a basketball program that his uncle runs. Under the current procedures, however, this young man has been and will continue to be punished because of a misdemeanor crime he committed at age 18.

The use of alternative and restorative justice strategies would have meant that this young man could be participating fully in his community. It would have meant that when he returns he doesn't have to struggle to get a foothold in a discriminatory job market severely biased against people with a criminal record. It would have meant that he would have the potential for a second chance. I urge you consider the impact that this bill would have on his life and the lives of thousands of young people across the state of Connecticut. Thank you for your consideration.