

-YALE COLLEGE- DEMOCRATS

Testimony of Michelle Peng
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380 College st., C41
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In favor: S.B. 18
An Act Concerning A Second Chance Society.

College students get a lot of second chances. Miss a deadline? Just email your professor! Flunk a class? Just drop it! Lost in New Haven and can't find your way back? Just call the Yale minibus! It makes a lot of sense--college kids are pretty dumb. I know people who have accidentally slept through 3 classes straight, put their phone in the dryer, and tried to cook food on their heater.

This probably isn't surprising to you. I'm sure all of you have a dumb young person in your life who sometime astounds you with their immaturity and shortsightedness. And this is something that's backed up with science--human brains aren't fully developed until around age 25. That's why we as a society have decided to build safety nets in for our young people.

Now, you have before you an opportunity to extend this courtesy to the often poor, often black young people who are tried as adults in our criminal justice system. In the status quo, a minor misdemeanor has the chance to negatively impact the rest of a young person's life. With this blight on their record, employers will be more likely to deny them of a job, they will be more likely to live in poverty, and they will be more likely to fall victim to recidivism.

These harms of trying young people as adults will haunt them for the rest of their lives. Keeping them in mind, the other risks we refuse to subject young people to seem trivial. If we will not expose people under 21 to the risks of alcohol, why are we willing to subject them to a lifetime of unemployment? If we won't give someone under 25 keys to a rental car, why are we willing to increase their chances of being locked up again?

If we claim to protect young people, why should we refuse to give them a second chance?