

November 29, 2012

CT Sentencing Commission

Re: Draft Proposal being considered on 12/20/12 to allow a person sentenced to a lengthy term of imprisonment for a crime committed when the person was under 18 to seek release under parole supervision after serving a substantial portion of the sentence.

To: Chairman Honorable Joseph M. Shortall, Judicial Branch, Vice Chair OPM Undersecretary Mike Lawlor, and Vice Chair Andrew J. Clark, Central Connecticut State University

Chairman Joseph M. Shortall, Vice Chair Mike Lawlor, Andrew J. Clark and other distinguished committee members, I, Laura Bachman want to thank you for this opportunity to address the Draft Proposal being considered on 12/20/12 to allow a person sentenced to a lengthy term of imprisonment for a crime committed when the person was under 18 to seek release under parole supervision after serving a substantial portion of the sentence. I understand that this proposal is being considered because juveniles are considered to have lessened culpability and are less deserving of the most severe punishments, based on the Graham v. Florida case. I urge you not to pass this proposal in the case of violent crime, including murder, manslaughter, kidnapping, sexual assault and sexual assault with a firearm, assault in the first or second degree, robbery, burglary, larceny and riot in the first degree.

I feel this way because my brother Eric was murdered in September, 2006 by his 16 year old friend and 2 others he didn't know, a 17 year old and a 19 year old. The 16 year old shooter, Alex planned this murder and had no remorse even years later when he wrote from prison to his friend that he felt my brother deserved it and he didn't feel bad about what he did. He even laughed at my mother as she was giving her victim impact statement years later and the judge commented in the local paper about how brutal he was. He also had a criminal history; he was released from prison a few weeks before murdering my brother for robbing someone. After killing my brother he went back to my brother's apartment two days later and stepped over his dead body to try to steal some more of his things.

The other juvenile involved in the murder, Kenneth had gotten out of prison a few weeks before my brother's murder for stabbing someone. Both of these juveniles had a history of violent crimes and when they got out of prison again committed a violent crime this time resulting in the loss of a life. I strongly believe in rehabilitation and sending prisoners to rehabilitation programs so they can successfully reenter society, I just ask you to not take any days off of their sentences to do so when the offense is a violent crime.

I also am a member of Survivors of Homicide, an organization where people who have lost loved ones to violence can post stories, memories, and devotions as well as offer peer support. As an organization we do not take stands on issues such as this but I do know that if this proposal was passed and violent criminals such as the murderers in these families' cases were let out early it would devastate a large number of our members. However, my biggest fear is for the residents of Connecticut. If juveniles who have committed violent crimes are let out early I fear especially because of proven cases, that they will reoffend again and harm many people. I also think this sends a message to the young people of our state that if they commit a violent crime they will not have to serve a lengthy prison sentence because of their age.

In conclusion, I urge you to exclude violent crimes from the Draft Proposal being considered on 12/20/12 to allow a person sentenced to a lengthy term of imprisonment for a crime committed when the person was under 18 to seek release under parole supervision after serving a substantial portion of the sentence. Thank you for your attention to this important issue and your commitment to the safety of all Connecticut residents.