

To Whom it may concern,

I have only just heard that there are a number of bills being discussed tomorrow morning pertaining to youth charges and sentencing for adult crimes.

I am hoping that I am not too late to share some support for the cause as well as a possible different perspective.

I have spent the last year and a half working inside Oregon State Penitentiary as a parenting facilitator; I have no background in corrections except for this time. I left the military and moved into the social services field which is what brought me to the corrections system.

During this time I have worked alongside a mass variety of men with numerous charges and convictions. One thing that always stood out to me is that I would have two men, same charges, both sentenced in the state, yet very different outlooks on futures. For example, I had facilitated a class with a man convicted of murder at 19, with a total of 10 years to serve due to a plea deal. I also worked with a man who is an orderly worker who was sentenced for murder, and has over 300 years time to serve from a crime he committed when he was 16.

Comparing these individuals I couldn't understand why one would have a measure 11 day for day sentence life times shorter than the other.

Working with youth there are considerations I feel were not considered in previous years working with youth offenders that are now being looked at; prefrontal cortex development, cognitive abilities and other factors.

I feel that there are great needs to address these sentencing policies for youth. One item I feel is of importance is Senate bill 968. It needs to be retroactive. There are more men locked away without the possibility of parole for crimes they committed as youth, yet watch as years go by and men come and go for worse or similar charges and get the opportunity to try a new life. These men have spent 20 or more years for the majority I have worked with behind bars, never knowing how to drive a car, never getting to know what working for a living is like, never seeing their mother's or family members, never getting to have new lives or make good on intentions to be better community members. I have spoke at length to these youth offenders now turning grey and quietly avoiding the general population. They are educated now, have made amends to their victims and families as best the could, have found amazing ways to contribute to a society that they may never get the chance to be real members of. If it is truly the hopes of changing lives that this meeting is being held, the lives of these forgotten men need to be considered as well. Most are I feel reformed, and desperate to live again.

I hope these words matter to you, because I never thought I would have these thoughts in my life time as a veteran, and a mother and a person who would be affected as a community member. This bill needs to be retroactive and these men deserve another look. Most have learned from their mistakes and now deserve to have hope of life outside the walls of our prisons.

Sincerely
Victoria Roggensack