

to Senate Judiciary Committee

from Barbara Ross
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Dear Senator Floyd Prozanski, chair and members of the committee,

I am writing in strong support of SB 1008. It provides an opportunity for youth who are sentenced in adult court to have a hearing half way through their sentence to determine if they have been adequately rehabilitated so that they can safely be released to supervision in the community. This is a personal issue for me. I have a grand daughter, age 16 , who got entangled with a dangerous boy friend and ran afoul of the law. She had a lot of underlying anger which made it easy for her to rationalize her actions. Luckily her juvenile court counselors were skilled, and compassionate and worked hard to get her back on the right path. Like many adolescents she is a mix of good and bad. Her counselors emphasized the good, supported a positive self image and helped her make positive choices to move in a good direction. Now she is finishing her GED program and is considering enrolling in PCC this fall.

She could easily have been charged with a major eleven crime and ended up at OYA. If this had happened, it would be so beneficial for her to have an opportunity for a second look hearing. It would have been important for her to have a goal to work toward, some hope that good behavior would be rewarded and she could get out earlier.

Often teenagers do foolish, dangerous and impulsive things. They should be held accountable for their actions. At the same time we should remember that most kids have the capacity to change, to grow up and become the kind of constructive law abiding adults we want them to be. Forgiveness is a vital part of this process.

As you consider how to vote on this bill, please remember that these young offenders are unique human beings who need hope if they are to move in a healthier direction. Second look hearings can give them that hope.

Also, as a side note, the state will save money by cutting their incarceration time in half.

I appreciate all your hard work on these critical issues. Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony.

Sincerely,
Barbara Ross