

From the office of Rep 5.23.19  
Anna Williams  
Amal

SB 1008

# The Bulletin

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## Editorial: Reform Oregon's juvenile justice

If Oregon wants to be smarter about crime, the Legislature should pass Senate Bill 1008.

Who is best equipped to decide what the sentence is for a juvenile? It's a judge who hears the evidence of the case.

But in Oregon it's prosecutors who get sweeping discretion with juveniles. Because of Measure 11's mandatory minimum sentences, juvenile offenders as young as 15 in Oregon are charged and sentenced as if they were adults.

SB 1008 puts needed flexibility back into the system. Sentences for juveniles could be tailored to the defendant. At the same time, judges would not lose the ability to set severe sentences. And prosecutors would be able to request a hearing to move a youth to the adult justice system. The bill also eliminates life without parole sentences for juveniles. Those convicted of a crime when they were younger than 18 would be able to seek parole after 15 years.

**Measure 11 passed two decades ago. Much has been learned about juvenile offenders in that time. SB 1008 updates Oregon's justice system based on brain research and tracking recidivism rates.**

Adolescent brains are not fully developed. There can be a lack of responsibility, a lack of weighing consequences, a significant susceptibility to peer pressure and more. Most parents could confirm that, and so has scientific research. It doesn't mean that juveniles should not face consequences for crimes. It does mean that they have more potential to turn their lives around. The law should give them that chance.

In addition to brain research, there have been studies looking at recidivism rates for juveniles tried and sentenced in the adult court compared with youth charged with similar offenses in juvenile court. It's impossible to do a perfect comparison, of course, but generally the recidivism rates are higher for juveniles who go through adult courts. The evidence is simply not there that punishing youth as adults prevents future crime.

So what is Oregon waiting for? Pass SB 1008.

— The Bend Bulletin Editorial Board, April 30, 2019

Excerpts, emphasis added. Read the full article here: <https://www.bendbulletin.com/opinion/7123966-151/editorial-reform-oregons-juvenile-justice>

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