

Support a Meaningful Opportunity for Release for Youth Sentenced to Adult Facilities

Currently: Youth under the age of 18 who commit certain crimes are routinely sentenced to life in prison with no opportunity for parole for 40 years.

- Extreme sentences for youth do not account for the fact that their brains are not fully developed. Tremendous growth and maturity often occur in a person's late teens through mid-20s.
- In part, this lack of maturity is why the U.S. Supreme Court has recognized that it is wrong to deny someone who commits a crime under the age of 18 the opportunity to demonstrate rehabilitation.
- It costs taxpayers \$2.5 million to incarcerate one juvenile for life – an enormous expense considering most such young people should be rehabilitated long before their 40-year parole eligibility date. Current Texas law does not provide a path to redemption for those who can prove that they merit a second chance.

Support HB 256 by Moody: Texas should provide a “second look” at parole eligibility for people convicted of crimes before their 18th birthday.

- An early parole hearing can focus on how the person has shown rehabilitation and maturity, and consider factors such as childhood trauma and the hallmark features of youth.
- This is in line with the national trend moving away from extreme punishments for children.
- With this policy change, Texas could save between \$4 million and \$12 million per year following implementation.
- By providing an opportunity for early release for rehabilitated, mature individuals, Texas will encourage incarcerated people to focus on bettering themselves, and the state can save significant taxpayer dollars without compromising public safety. This policy will also allow people to fulfill their true potential and become contributing members of the community.

SUPPORTERS:

Texas Criminal Justice Coalition

Texas Public Policy Foundation

Texas Association of Business

Texas Appleseed

Texans Care for Children

Christian Life Commission

Goodwill Central Texas

Prison Fellowship

ACLU of Texas

R Street Institute