

3 Easy Steps
Below is a letter to legislators

1. Add in your name, address, and email to the letter.
2. Add in the name and address of the State Lawmaker to whom the letter is being sent.
3. Sign! Once finished, fax or e-mail your letter to your legislator.

WHEN FINISHED, ERASE ALL RED

[Date]

[Your name and address]

[Member of State House of Representatives
Street
City, State, Zip Code]

[Member of State Senate
Street
City, State, Zip Code]

RE: Support for Abolishing Life Without Parole for Children

Dear [State Legislator],

I am writing to express my support for legislation that will abolish the practice of sentencing children to life in prison without the possibility of parole. The United States is the only country that allows for this extreme form of sentencing, which disregards the unique capacity of children to grow, change, and mature into adulthood. Sentencing children to die in prison is in direct contradiction to what adolescent brain research confirms: children are less culpable than adults because of their diminished decision-making ability.

Legislation abolishing life without parole for children conforms to scientific research regarding juveniles and brings the State into compliance with United States Supreme Court decisions in *Miller v. Alabama* and other cases that require individualized consideration of factors such as age at the time of the offense; children's diminished ability to appreciate risks and consequences; family, home, and neighborhood environment; whether familial and/or peer pressure affected the child; past exposure to violence; drug, alcohol and mental health history; and a child's potential for rehabilitation. Twenty-one states and the District of Columbia ban life without parole for children, and another five states have no one serving the sentence. The national trend recognizes that rather than sentencing a child to die in prison, we have a constitutional and moral obligation to provide meaningful opportunities for young people to earn their release if they demonstrate maturity and rehabilitation.

I strongly believe that children should be held responsible for their actions in an age-appropriate manner. We know that children are fundamentally different from adults and that their brains are still developing. Children do not have adult levels of judgment, impulse control, or ability to assess risks, and we know that they are more susceptible than adults to negative influences and outside pressures. I encourage you to support legislation that accounts for these fundamental differences and establishes a sentencing scheme that holds children accountable for their actions in an age-appropriate manner by leaving room for rehabilitation.

No child is beyond the hope of redemption; therefore no child should be condemned to a lifetime behind bars without any opportunity for parole or review. I therefore respectfully urge you to support legislation that will end this practice in our State. Thank you for your attention to this crucial matter.

Sincerely,

[Signature]