

PRESS RELEASE

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YOUTHFUL PAROLE BILL SIGNED INTO LAW BRINGING NEW PAROLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR FIRST TIME IN 40 YEARS

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Governor JB Pritzker signed HB531, the Youthful Parole Bill, which creates the first new opportunities for parole in Illinois since 1978, when parole that includes release for rehabilitated inmates was eliminated in favor of a “determinate sentencing” system.

Illinois rejoins 33 states that offer some form of parole to release inmates who have demonstrated they are no longer a danger to their communities.

The law creates new parole opportunities for those under 21 coming into the system today with extreme sentences ahead of them. Individuals seeking review will have the right to an attorney and the Prisoner Review Board will be required to consider the hallmark features of youth and subsequent growth when making their determinations.

“Our correctional system should be premised on the idea of rehabilitation, not retribution. So that when somebody has shown that they really are different, we ought to take that seriously, and we should give them a second chance,” said former House Majority Leader Barbara Flynn Currie, a chief sponsor of the legislation and longtime champion of criminal justice reform.

Over the past decade, the United States Supreme Court has [repeatedly affirmed](#) that youth must be treated differently from adults, declaring them “[categorically less culpable](#)” for their crimes and emphasizing that young people should have meaningful opportunities for release. Despite the Court’s directions over the past 15 years, until the Youthful Parole Bill was signed, Illinois had not provided any mechanism for youth serving lengthy adult sentences to earn release.

Under Currie and State Senator Don Harmon’s leadership, the Youthful Parole Bill passed the Illinois Senate on May 31, 2017 with a vote of 36-17 and the Illinois House of Representatives on November 28, 2018 with a vote of 67-41.

Both Cook County State’s Attorney Kim Foxx and Cook County Public Defender Amy Campanelli supported the legislation. The Prisoner Review Board, the state entity that will be responsible for conducting reviews, played a key role in deliberations and in educating lawmakers about parole, as did a broad coalition of organizations and activists, including inmate family members, public defenders, and members of the faith community.

“My son got a second chance because of the US Supreme Court’s *Miller* ruling in 2012, but I knew other people’s children would not get a second chance unless we changed the law,” said Julie Anderson, an activist whose son is now serving 30 years after his life-without-parole sentence was vacated due to the *Miller* ruling. Anderson was 15 at the time of his original sentencing.

The new law creates mid-sentence parole consideration for those 20 or under when their crime occurred. For most crimes, consideration will happen after 10 years of actual incarceration, with additional consideration hearings at 15 and 20 years if denied release. But for first-degree murder and aggravated criminal sexual assault, consideration would occur after 20 years of actual incarceration, with additional consideration at 30 years.

In a letter of support for the legislation, Amy Campanelli, Cook County Public Defender, noted that “with [the bill’s] passage, Illinois will join the vast majority of states in this country which allow incarcerated individuals to show their incarceration no longer serves the public’s interests. It will save Illinois money by ending the State’s financial obligation of housing and caring for incarcerated individuals when incarceration is no longer necessary. And we believe the possibility of parole will make the environment within IDOC facilities safer as there will be an additional incentive for incarcerated individuals to comply with IDOC’s rules and regulations.”

The bill does not apply to those sentenced to natural life, those that committed predatory criminal sexual assault or those who murdered a police officer (or other peace officers). The bill also ensures that victims, witnesses, and other concerned citizens may be heard (protecting identities) by the Board whenever release is considered; and, it provides attorneys to indigent applicants to aid in case for parole.

The law is prospective only (no one currently incarcerated is eligible).

Learn more about parole [here](#).

ABOUT RESTORE JUSTICE

Restore Justice, which comprises [Restore Justice Foundation](#) and [Restore Justice Illinois](#), works to address issues faced by those serving life or de-facto life sentences, their families, and their communities. Founded in 2015 by a dedicated group of advocates that included the late former Congressman, Federal Judge and White House Counsel Abner Mikva, Restore Justice trains and supports advocates, conducts research, nurtures partnerships, and develops policy solutions that will roll back ineffective “tough on crime” policies of the past, replacing them with compassionate, smart, and safe policies for the future.
