



SENTENCED TO DIE IN PRISON, DESPITE UNIQUE LIKELIHOOD OF REHABILITATION

Twenty-eight states and Washington, D.C. don't allow ANY child to be sentenced to life without parole.

Why We Need to Abolish Juvenile Life Without Parole Sentences in Illinois:

When imposing a sentence of life without parole (LWOP), a judge decides the youth is beyond rehabilitation. Consider the following.

- SCIENCE: Both scientific and actuarial studies have proven the brain continues developing until a person is around 25 years old.
- SCOTUS: The US Supreme Court has repeatedly emphasized that children are “categorically less culpable” than adults and are **more susceptible to rehabilitation**.
- ILLINOIS COURTS: Illinois courts have affirmed SCOTUS in recent cases and now face the difficult task of untangling decades of excessive sentencing.
- We have found **no research that demonstrates juvenile life without parole sentences (JLWOP) have a deterrent effect**.
- INTERNATIONAL LAW: The practice of sentencing children to LWOP violates Article 37 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

Solution:

We can build on recent legislative progress in Illinois to align our state with new norms, court decisions, and international standards.

HB 5670 would prohibit LWOP sentences for all youth who were under the age of 21 when their crime was committed. **Juveniles could still serve life in prison.** This bill simply ensures they have a limited opportunity to be considered for parole. **The legislation would not be retroactive.** Here's what it would do:

- All youth given long terms of incarceration would have the opportunity to go before the Prisoner Review Board after 10 years and would then be allowed to seek parole two more times—unless they've been convicted of first-degree murder, aggravated criminal sexual assault, or predatory criminal sexual assault of a child.
- Youth convicted of one of the above three offenses would be eligible for review by the parole board after 20 years, and again after another 10 years.
- Youth convicted of first-degree murder of a police officer or another protected class of victim, or those who received natural life at their original sentencing hearing, would be eligible for review after 40 years, and again after another 10 years.

The Youthful Parole Bill, HB 531 – now Public Act 100-1182, is one of the most significant accomplishments of the Illinois General Assembly and the Governor's Office. This new bill is a natural progression to ensure no children are sentenced to life without the possibility of parole. It would align Illinois with the majority of states and Washington, D.C.



HB 5670

House Sponsor: Representative Rita Mayfield (D)

Supporters:

- Chicago Appleseed Fund for Justice
- Chicago Community Bond Fund
- Chicago Council of Lawyers
- Community Renewal Society
- Chicago Urban League
- Illinois Justice Project
- Restore Justice Illinois

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