

# MEDIA ALERT

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## **Restore Justice Applauds Illinois Legislative Black Caucus' Criminal Law Omnibus Bill, Welcomes Inclusion of Felony-Murder Reform**

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Restore Justice Illinois applauds the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus and its [criminal law omnibus bill](#). We thank Illinois Senate Criminal Law Committee Chairman Elgie Sims (D-Chicago), Senator Robert Peters (D-Chicago), and Representative Justin Slaughter (D-Chicago) for leading the way to make Illinois a more just and compassionate state.

The omnibus contains a provision to amend [Illinois's felony-murder law](#). This necessary measure would bring Illinois into alignment with the majority of states that have felony-murder statutes. Only 18 states and the federal government use a law similar to Illinois. Currently, in Illinois, a person can be charged and convicted of first-degree murder even if they did not actually kill the victim or intend to commit the murder. A felony-murder conviction carries a minimum sentence of 20 years and a maximum sentence of natural life.

In one case, Chicago [prosecutors charged a 23-year-old man with felony-murder after a police officer crashed into an innocent bystander](#). The 23-year-old had allegedly participated in a burglary. The victim's close friend implored a judge not to convict the young man of murder. He did so anyway.

The Black Caucus' bill would prevent cases like this. It would ensure people are only held responsible for murders they commit, plan to commit, or know will happen. **This change would ensure someone is truly culpable for murder if they are to be given our state's harshest possible punishment.**

Youthful offenders are disproportionately affected by the felony-murder rule, as they are more susceptible to peer pressure. An abundance of research shows the [brain continues forming into a person's mid 20s](#), and the frontal cortex, which controls for risk, develops last. In August 2019, in Lake County, [prosecutors charged five teenagers with murdering their friend/cousin](#). The children had apparently sought to steal a car, when the car's owner shot and killed a 14-year-old boy. While officials ultimately dropped murder charges, people

throughout the state are convicted under the felony-murder law and sentenced to extreme prison terms.

**[Join Restore Justice](#) in calling for the Illinois General Assembly to pass the criminal law omnibus bill. It's long past time to make our laws fairer and to acknowledge the role racism plays at every stage of the system, including in using the felony-murder statute to sentence people to extreme prison terms.** The felony-murder law and other draconian policies create a net that catches Black children and never lets them go. Passing this omnibus bill and fixing the felony-murder statute are important steps in advancing justice in our state. [You can help us by writing to your state senator and state representative in support of the provision to fix Illinois's felony-murder law.](#)

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*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.*