

# *the* CAMPAIGN *for the* FAIR SENTENCING *of* YOUTH



Bill: House Bill 759

Title: Criminal Procedure – Motion to Reduce Duration of Sentence – Repeal of Sentencing Date Limitation

Date: February 12, 2026

Position: SUPPORT

Committee: Judicial Proceedings Committee

CONTACT: Eddie Ellis, Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth

Chair Bartlett, Vice-Chair Davis, and members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Eddie Ellis. I serve as the Co-Director of Outreach and Member Services at the Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth (CFSY), and I have the honor of leading the Incarcerated Children's Advocacy Network (ICAN), a one-of-a-kind national community of more than 300 adults who were sentenced to life or other extreme sentences as children, at age 17 or younger.

I respectfully submit this testimony in support of House Bill 759. I want to thank Delegate Stinnett for introducing this legislation and acknowledge the General Assembly's continued commitment to fair and constitutional youth sentencing.

The CFSY is a national organization working to end extreme youth sentencing and advance age-appropriate, constitutional approaches to accountability, healing, and public safety.

The ICAN community is made up of adults who were once children sentenced to life or extreme sentences and spent decades in prison. I am honored to call these individuals my brothers and sisters. Today, we are home, contributing to our communities, supporting our families, and creating positive change. We refuse to let our past define our future, and we are living proof of what opportunity, hope, and second chances look like. We also have a local support group for individuals who have come home under the Juvenile Restoration Act that we've been hosting for the past four and a half years. In this space, we offer any resources we have, share programming opportunities, and provide a safe, supportive environment where people can feel heard and valued.

CFSY proudly supported the 2021 passage of the Juvenile Restoration Act, which created a meaningful opportunity for sentence review after 20 years for individuals who were under 18 at the time of their offense. However, the current sentencing-date limitation leaves some children unfairly excluded from that opportunity.

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House Bill 759 is a straightforward, common-sense technical fix. It removes this arbitrary restriction and ensures that all children under 18 regardless of when they were sentenced have access to the same opportunity for review. This change promotes fairness, aligns with constitutional principles recognizing that children are different from adults for sentencing purposes, and reduces unnecessary legal risk for the state.

Most importantly, HB 759 restores hope for those who are on the inside and hope for family members who are waiting for their loved ones to have an opportunity to be seen. For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 759. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely Eddie Ellis