

Judiciary Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: SB-503 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

AN ACT CONCERNING SENTENCING OF AND PAROLE ELIGIBILITY FOR INDIVIDUALS WHOSE OFFENSE WAS COMMITTED WHEN SUCH

Title: INDIVIDUAL WAS UNDER THE AGE OF TWENTY-SIX YEARS.

Vote Date: 3/24/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/18/2026

File No.: 593

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Judiciary Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill extends recognized age-appropriate developmental protections against disproportionate punishment for Emerging Adults (under age 26) and resolves a statutory inconsistency where access to review is precluded by arbitrary cutoffs. The rigid restrictions currently in place function as categorical exclusions that determine parole eligibility by sentencing date rather than an individual's age at the time of offense, and ignore well-documented neurological research confirming that the capacity to rationalize, control impulses, and resist negative peer influence extends into the mid-20s. By prioritizing maturity, personal accountability, and demonstrated rehabilitation, this proposal provides a statutory pathway to a meaningful opportunity for review, ensuring continued confinement is imposed only when necessary and appropriate as determined by present risk instead of inequitable procedural formalities.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

External Affairs Division, Department of Justice: The External Affairs Division takes no stance on the policies presented in the bill. However, the division notes that Section 1 could result in more hearings, and subsequently the need to increase the number of victim services advocates at the Board of the Pardons and Paroles. Additionally, Section 2 includes language that could lead victim services advocates to explain the application of childhood brain development to a victim. Finally, the bill could result in an increase in the number of forensic evaluations conducted by the Court Support Services Division, which could come at an added cost to the state.

Christina Ghio, Acting Child Advocate, Office of Child Advocate (OCA): Acting Child Advocate Ghio testified in support of the bill, underscoring that there are currently 212 people who are not eligible for early parole despite the consideration that they have committed identical crimes at identical ages to those who are eligible under the law passed in 2023. The OCA notes that 85% of the individuals currently not eligible are Black and Hispanic, reflecting the disparities within the criminal justice system. This bill would repeal the arbitrary cutoff of October 1, 2005 and expand early parole eligibility to the age of 26, in alignment with psychological research which displays differences in the brains of mature adults and adults under the age of 26.

Patrick Griffin, Chief State Attorney, Division of Criminal Justice (DCJ): Chief State Attorney Griffin testified in opposition to the bill, stating the bill "amounts to arbitrary line drawing" with the increase in parole eligibility age which is not scientifically backed nor constitutionally mandated. Griffin notes that there should not be a one sized fit all approach to parole eligibility, especially with varying degrees of crime severity. Raising the parole eligibility age could impair plea bargains (which constitute most criminal cases) and judicial sentencing. Additionally, DCJ raised opposition to Section 2, which seeks to broaden the sentencing provisions of Section 54-91g when under existing statute judges already possess broad discretion in sentencing to consider a variety of circumstances surrounding the crime, including but not limited to offender's background and history, age, cognitive and physical development. However, DCJ does not oppose the elimination of the cut-off sentencing date of October 1, 2005.

Natasha M. Pierre Esq., State Victim Advocate, Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA): State Victim Advocate Pierre testified in opposition to the bill, stating that the expansion of parole consideration to any person who was under 26 years of age at the time of offense would not only benefit the defendant during the initial sentencing but provide a second opportunity for analysis which is already factored into the initial sentencing. OVA encourages a pause on additional criminal justice reform until a thorough study is completed on the effectiveness of recent criminal justice reforms, including recidivism rates.

Jennifer Zaccagini, Chairperson, State of Connecticut Board of Pardons and Paroles: Chairperson Zaccagini respectfully offers practical considerations regarding the implementation of this bill. First, Zaccagini encourages the General Assembly to ensure that the board has adequate resources for staffing, particularly to increase pay for part-time board members given the increase in workload. Secondly, the Board highlights that the term "eligible for parole" is ambiguous, not specifying whether this applies to eligibility for parole hearing or the determination of suitability for release on parole. The Board wants to affirm that it retains the discretionary power to grant or deny parole after considering all the information provided during a parole hearing while applying the Structured Decision-Making Framework.

DeVaughn Ward, Corrections Ombudsperson, State of Connecticut: Ombudsperson Ward testified in support of the bill, stressing that it reflects the recognition that individuals who enter the criminal justice system are categorically different regarding development, impulse control, and their capacity for rehabilitation. Ward notes that the prison population has increased and that this bill could provide an avenue to responsibly manage this growth, which would also represent sound fiscal policy as medical costs increase as the incarcerated

population ages. Finally, Ward underscores that the bill does not mandate release but rather creates a mechanism for individualized review by the Board of Pardons and Paroles.

Deborah Del Prete Sullivan, Legal Counsel, Director, Office of Chief Public Defender:

Deborah Del Prete Sullivan supports this bill as the agency proposed the expansion of edibility for all persons who are between the age of 15-21 at the time of the commission of the offense. As a result of the cutoff date of October 1, 2005, many convicted after that date were not eligible for review. Age is not the only eligibility requirement under this bill, time served is also a consideration and this bill does not equate to release. Miller v. Alabama decision of the Supreme Court decided that juvenile offenders are less culpable for their crimes and more capable of rehabilitation. The agency supports the bill's expansion of eligibility for these hearings to include all persons who were under the age of 26 at the time of their offense. They request that the Committee vote favorably on the bill.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Sarana Carter, Co-Executive Director, A Better Way Foundation: She testified in support of SB 503, advocating for raising the age of juvenile parole eligibility to include individuals under 26 at the time of the offense and removing the October 1, 2005, sentencing cutoff. She emphasized the impact of trauma, mental health, and systemic inequities through a personal account, arguing that expanded parole eligibility would provide second chances and prevent further harm within the justice system.

BJ Casey, Ph.D., Christina L. Williams Professor of Neuroscience, Chair, Department of Neuroscience and Behavior, Barnard College of Columbia University: She testified in support of SB 503, stating that brain and psychological development continue into the mid-twenties, particularly in systems governing impulse control, decision-making, and emotional regulation. She emphasized that individuals under 26 show higher risk-taking and less mature self-regulation, but also significant capacity for growth and change over time. She noted that criminal behavior typically declines with age as development progresses. She concluded that the bill reflects scientific evidence that young people remain developmentally changeable and capable of rehabilitation.

Addys M. Castillo, Founding Director, Movement Defense Strategies: She testified in support of SB 503, stating that young people under 26 are developmentally different and highly capable of rehabilitation due to ongoing brain development. She emphasized that the bill improves public safety by allowing parole review based on growth and demonstrated change rather than fixed sentencing cutoffs. She noted her experience in juvenile justice and alternatives-to-incarceration programs as evidence that investment in rehabilitation reduces harm and strengthens outcomes. She concluded that the bill aligns accountability with fairness and second chances.

Alex Brown, MSW Student and Policy & Advocacy Intern: She testified in support of SB 503, emphasizing that young people, like herself at age 19 at the time of her offense, are still developing well into their mid-twenties, particularly in areas tied to judgment, impulse control, and decision-making. She argued that the bill recognizes this developmental science while providing a fair opportunity for parole review based on rehabilitation and growth. She highlighted the unfairness of the October 1, 2005, cutoff, noting it excludes similarly situated individuals based solely on timing rather than readiness or change. She concluded that the

bill advances fairness and accountability by allowing individuals to demonstrate who they have become over time.

DeAndre “Grim D” Brown, Executive Director & Affiliate (Evolve Love & BLM860): He testified in support of SB 503, stating he was incarcerated for an offense committed at age 20 and has experienced both incarceration and parole supervision, including time on an ankle monitor following release. He emphasized that the bill recognizes that young people under 26 are still developing and should have a meaningful opportunity for parole review based on growth and rehabilitation. He described his own experiences in prison, including exposure to violence and mental health challenges, as evidence of the harms of incarcerating young people during key developmental years. He concluded that the bill supports accountability, reduces recidivism, and strengthens communities by allowing consideration of rehabilitation and expanding pathways for reentry.

Daniel Webb: He testified in support of SB 503, advocating for expanded parole eligibility. He alleged wrongful conviction at age 26 based on circumstantial evidence, claimed prosecutorial misconduct and inadequate defense representation, and described being sentenced to a lengthy term including decades in solitary confinement. He emphasized longstanding assertions of innocence and ongoing efforts to obtain judicial review, citing limited legal resources and prior delays. He recommended increased access to meaningful review opportunities for long-serving incarcerated individuals and noted additional testimony support from another incarcerated person, Shawn Smith (#112250).

Tess Wheelwright, Director, Wesleyan University Center for Prison Education: She testified in support of SB 503, emphasizing that prison education promotes rehabilitation, reduces recidivism, and prepares individuals for reentry, highlighting successful outcomes of formerly incarcerated students and supporting expanded parole eligibility based on demonstrated growth.

Sinclair Williams, Attorney: He testified in support of SB 503, emphasizing personal observations of significant maturation among individuals who committed offenses in youth, and argued the bill provides a fair opportunity for parole based on growth while benefiting public safety and reducing incarceration costs.

Devin Quirk, Coalition for Healing and Justice: Supports the bill because youthful offenders need more support and different treatment within the carceral system. He describes his own experience entering incarceration at age 17 under adult conditions and states that a lack of programming and support contributed to continued poor outcomes.

Maya Rabinowitz: Supports the bill and states that raising the age threshold to 25 aligns with research on brain development. She also argues that the bill would address racial disparities and allow cost savings from earlier release to be reinvested in community services.

Shardel Ragin: Supports the bill and contends that she did not fully understand her actions when she committed a crime at age 14. Being housed with adults as a juvenile caused her psychological trauma, increased her exposure to criminal behavior, and offered no preparation for reintegration into society.

Robyn Porter, Former State of Connecticut Representative, 94th District: Robyn Porter supports this bill and has been an advocate of this bill as it is long overdue. This bill does not guarantee release, it does however offer the opportunity for a review. There is power in second chances providing individuals are given the tools, support, and opportunity to evolve beyond their worst decisions. There are fiscal benefits to their release as they often come home as skilled workers and contribute to state by paying taxes, creating jobs, and stimulating local economy. The question is not if people can change, we know they do, it is if our system will allow space for the continuation of that change to realize in real time.

Gladys Aviles Rodriguez: Gladys Aviles Rodriguez supports this bill and speaks from a position of faith that recognizes accountability and redemption. The current cutoff date of October 1, 2005 is a violation of the principles of justice by permanently excluding individuals from demonstrating transformation. Those who are incarcerated and are impacted by this date often do charitable work, complete advanced education, and facilitate healing for crime victims through restorative programs. By giving those inside a reason to change we can make our communities safer.

Joe Baltas: Joe Baltas supports this bill. At the age of 22 he was given a sentence of life; he has a history mental illness, and his family has a history of violence. Both parents were sentenced to prison for murder and currently he is known as one of DOC's most dangerous prisoners and he feels this is a direct result of being sentenced to life with no possibility of parole at a young age. Rather than being given a chance or hope of a life he was told to rot. He feels he is an example of what giving children a sentence of life without a chance for release can do to someone.

Tracie Bernardi Guzman, Founder and CEO of Reentry Solutions CT, Case Manager, Waterbury Reentry Welcome Center: Tracie Bernardi Guzman supports this bill as it speaks the truth of growing up beyond your worst moment. At 19 she joined a gang as she did not have good judgement or impulse control and the only moment she knew was the moment she was in. Science now proves that the brain does not fully mature until the age of 26. She made bad decisions and at the age of 19 she was sentenced to 30 years. After serving 23 years she was released and returned home determined to be an asset to her community. She has built a life of service, leadership and healing and she doesn't have to disclose her record. SB503 does not guarantee release but it does guarantee fairness. It does not look at who a person was but at who they have become.

Pedro Carrasquillo: Pedro Carrasquillo supports this bill as he was a man given a second chance. He was among the first group under the juvenile law who was given a second chance after serving twenty years in prison. He reentered society and committed to transformation and stayed out of trouble. He wanted to be different, and he used his time to start over. Bill 503 offers others what was offered to me, a pathway to redemption as it recognizes the ability that someone can grow. He is the change.

Lucius Couloute, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Trinity College: Lucius Couloute according to research have a diminished judgement relative to older adults and they have a heightened capacity for growth and change. This bill recognizes accountability by ensuring the individual shows rehabilitation but also takes into consideration that young adulthood is a developmental stage that is marked by maturation and rapid change. There are clear public benefits to policies to show rehabilitation matters and SB503 representees a modest but

important step toward a rational and fair system. It recognizes both accountability and human development.

Brian Donohue, Founder, Not Just Us: Brian Donohue supports this bill, as a social worker who is aware that the human brain does not fully develop until the age of 25. This allows inmates who were younger than 21 years of age to be given the opportunity to be released and supervised and reintegrate back into society. Incarcerating individuals the cost is \$323.00 per day, by releasing them this money could be used towards other resources. The parole board could assess individuals and decide; he emphasized that this is not a get out of jail free card.

Purvi Dudhedia: Purvi Dudhedia supports this bill and requests that the arbitrary date of October 1, 2005, be changed as it is blocking over 164 individuals in Connecticut prisons. There is a fundamental injustice that a date can impact two individuals convicted of the same crime. There are many who have been affected by date do remarkable things in their communities and the cost to keep someone in prison is \$50,000 per year, this money could be invested in other programs. It is fair that this arbitrary date be changed to give these 164 individuals a chance.

Yaseen Eldik: Yaseen Eldik supports this bill as he feels that forgiveness belongs to the family and civic mercy belongs to the law. Research has confirmed that people under the age of 26 are still developing in decision making and judgement. SB503 recognizes that growth does not end at conviction and a just judicial system should recognize demonstrated change. Incarceration does not always provide all that is needed for a person's successful return to society. Accountability is necessary; however, people should not be denied the possibility of more being than the worst thing they have done.

Barbara Fair, Stop Solitary CT: Barbara Fair supports this bill and feels it is time to stop playing politics with people's lives. Scientific research has shown that the part of the brain that controls impulsivity, aids in decision making and understanding consequences is underdeveloped up to the age of 25. In addition, no one can explain the arbitrary date of October 1, 2005, as a cut off of the current law. Though it is difficult for some on the committee to understand, not all victims seek vengeance. She explained that many would like to ask why the person who committed the crime did it. Connecticut is too punitive, and supporters of the bill should not have to return year after year for new legislation.

Shineika Fareus, Black and Brown Student Union: Sheneika Fareus supports this bill. Science has long established that the human brain, especially the part of the brain that governs judgment, impulse control and decision-making does not fully mature until the mid-twenties. Connecticut took the step in 2023 when the legislature passed PA 23-169 which allowed the state to take a second look at emerging adults. The arbitrary date in that bill October 1, 2005, created two pathways, one that gets a pathway and one that hits a wall. The second group deserve a chance to be seen; this is not mercy, but justice.

Hassan Foster: Hassan Foster supports this bill. As a member of the community that this bill has had a deep impact, he feels that it recognizes the scientific research that brains do not fully mature until the age of 26. It does several other things too, it promotes incentives for and rehabilitation, as well as strengthens families and communities. It is important to note

that this bill does not guarantee a release, it promotes true public safety and smarter use of resources.

James Forman, Jr., Professor, Yale Law School: James Forman, Jr. supports this bill and stated that he would not be testifying if this bill made the state less safe. There are two examples of laws like this that keep our streets safe and show that the communities can thrive: One being the Washington D.C. Incarceration Reduction Amendment; this bill has been successful with a 3% recidivism rate. The other was in Maryland that the State Supreme Court decided, Unger v. Maryland, which led to 200 people being released, all convicted of violent crimes. Of those 200, there was a 3% recidivism. These are examples of how bills like this can work.

Marisol Garcia, Adjunct Professor, Eastern Connecticut State University, Executive Director of Prison2Public Policy: Marisol Garcia supports this bill. She believes that these incarcerated individuals were convicted at a young age when their brains were not fully developed yet, and they were viewed as 40 years old adults with decades of experience. This is the definition of a structurally vulnerable class. This is not a moral judgement but are scientific facts that show human brains continue to develop until around 25-26. When we deny emerging adults the opportunity for parole review, we are not protecting the public. We should ensure Connecticut leads the nation in justice that is principled, evidence-based and rooted in human dignity.

Jerome N. Frank, Legal Services Organization, Yale Law School and Miriam Gohara, Clinical Professor, Yale Law School and Anjali Pathmanathan, Supervising Attorney and Clinical Teaching Fellow: Jerome N. Frank and Miriam Gohara support this bill. SB503 aligns with the scientific research that humans have a gradual maturation. There are many benefits to SB503, it would reduce racial disparity in incarceration, promote public safety and mitigate the high cost of long-term incarceration. Seventy percent of those barred from the parole eligibility cut-off date of October 1, 2005, are black and they believe this is a grave racial injustice.

Lisa B. Puglisi, MD, Yale Internal Medicine: Lisa Puglisi supports this bill as she has witnessed the growth, change and accomplishment among her patients, particularly those who were incarcerated as young people. Research confirms that developmentally young adults continue to mature until their mid-20's and have the capacity to change. This allows a person to demonstrate that growth and change before the Parole Board.

Craig Gore, Executive Director, The Critical Exchange: Craig Gore supports this bill as he believes that holding a human in confinement for decades for a crime they committed as children is not a benefit to society. As a 12-year-old, he was arrested; he never knew his father as his mother said he went to prison and his son almost had a similar story. The disruption of Black families due to the justice system is an American tragedy. He hopes that Connecticut leads with wisdom and not fear. There are only pros and no cons with SB503 apart from unfounded fears and misconceptions about the judicial system and the prison industrial complex in Connecticut.

Elizabeth Hinton, Professor of History, Black Studies, Yale Law School: Elizabeth Hinton supports this bill. Connecticut has the highest Black-white racial disparity in youth incarceration in the nation. It is a disgrace and reflects on systemic failures. She believes

the cut-off date of October 1, 2005, is arbitrary and has a staggering racial impact. The current law has a devastating impact on families, children growing up without parents, communities lose caregivers, wage earners, and it causes trauma on top of trauma. She stated that this bill would allow for a second chance to people who demonstrate that they have grown up and healed from the mistake they made when very young.

Fred Hodges, City Council member in Bridgeport, Family Reentry/Community

Resources for Justice: Fred Hodges supports this bill as he has through his work with men who have spent many years in DOC and returned home. He has found people can and do change. The person who committed the crime before the age of 26 are often not the same person decades later. This bill is not a guarantee for release, but it does give the opportunity to have a review-a second chance. He was incarcerated and began his transforming his life. He was forgiven by the victim's family, and they were willing to give me a second chance. The question is does the system believe an individual can truly change.

Lisa Lowe, Professor, Yale: Lisa Lowe supports this bill. She feels that those who committed crimes as juveniles can change and do. This is not an automatic release; however, it would allow these individuals a chance to go before the parole board to have the ability to assess an individual's fitness for release.

James Jeter, Co-founder and Executive Director, Full Citizen Coalition: James Jeter supports this bill. He was released from prison in 2016, was re-sentenced and given a modification. When released he was released, he had no celebratory feeling about getting out. It was difficult as he carries his harm and all the work, he does not negate the harm I caused in my youth. Since being out for 7 years, he has spent the time saving lives, changing culture, and changing laws. He spends every day trying to bridge a breach that he caused.

Amber Kelly, PhD, MSW, Professor, Quinnipiac University: Amber Kelly supports this bill, and she has witnessed firsthand what can become possible if Connecticut allows second chances. She has an extensive background working in prisons in Connecticut and in Florida. She has witnessed men and women walk out of prison and accomplish extraordinary things. SB503 does not guarantee release, but it does allow for the possibility for a second chance.

Brennan Klein, Professor, Northeastern University: Brennan Klein supports this bill on the merits. It aligns with the framework of science that establishes brain development and will change the arbitrary current law's cutoff of October 1, 2005. There is a fiscal advantage to also passing this bill. This bill does not open prison doors, it offers the possibility of hearings.

Greta LeFleur, Associate Professor of American Studies, Yale University: Greta LeFleur supports this bill. The United Supreme Court over 20 years ago announced a new approach to sentencing young people who are convicted of crimes. Those changes have continued to happen in the Court. Since the 17th century the impulse control, judgement and decision-making of young people has been recognized. Also, the cutoff date of October 1, 2005, creates two identical groups of people treated differently under the law.

Adrian Peeler, Community Outreach Coordinator, Coalition for Communal Healing Through Justice Reform: Adrian Peeler supports this bill as he feels this bill is not only morally just but also fiscally responsible. Not just fiscally responsible, this bill also

strengthens families and will allow for model accountability for at-risk youth, fill workforce gaps, and demonstrate that Connecticut values redemption and second chances.

Alicia Strong, Co-Director, NBRJC: Alicia Strong supports this bill. Through her work at the NBRJC she has worked with those who are incarcerated and those who have been released. She has seen the change and their engagement in the community. This bill does not guarantee release, it simply allows a Parole Board Hearing to thoroughly review the individuals record.

Francisco A. Lopez, LLC, Clinical & Forensic Psychologist, Yale School of Medicine: Francisco Lopez supports this bill as he has experience offering expert opinions and consulting on forensic psychological matters, especially those related to PA 15-84. Research is clear that the human brain continues to develop through early adulthood. This bill appropriately recognizes that development does not just stop at age 21 but rather continues until mid-20's. It is important to remember that this is not a guarantee of release but allows for careful evidence-informed review of risk.

Emme Magliato, Program Coordinator, Yale Prison Education Initiative: Emme Magliato supports this bill as she has committed her life and career to the belief that people can change. Those released through Connecticut's 18 and under parole bill are re-integrating into families and communities, contributing to society and it is highly unlikely they will return to prison. This bill is a logical step towards decarceration, saving our state millions of dollars and investing in hope, transformation, and prevention.

The following were individuals testified that they were incarcerated at a young age and rehabilitated themselves to become productive members of society. They currently are employed; many have reunited with family and are productive members of their community and society.

Clifford Holly
Andrew Dickson
James Pinder
Janice Parker
Juan Vazquez

Bryan Jordan
Robin Ledbetter
Christopher Lminggio
Sandy Lomonico,
LMSW, MPH

Ruperto Lugo
Jonathan Roach
Tracy Shumaker

Students testified that this bill supports the expansion of early parole if the person convicted was under the age of 26. They feel the date of October 1, 2005 is an arbitrary date and that 165 individuals remain incarcerated and could benefit from this legislation. The scientific research shows that significant cognitive and emotional development continue well into mid-20's. This bill will allow those who are eligible the opportunity to demonstrate to the parole board that they are ready to contribute to society.

Alexandra Guzman Caceres
Andrea Ho
Danielle Hopkins
Alexandra Kleinman
Sarah Kwon
Jake Siesel
Alexis Sturdy

Toby Phillips
Crystal Foretia
Jake Loor
Elsa Julien Lora
Babz Rawls Ivy
J. Sheim Perry
Cyan Blackwell

The following people testified that they support the bill. This bill will help those who entered prison as a young person, and it demonstrates they can develop growth and rehabilitation after decades of incarceration. It is fair yet holds them accountable and still holds careful review for public safety.

Rick Felix
Michael Gaetano
Diane Norton Gartano
Adam Gonzalez
Israel Gonzalez
Eleanor Grosso
Joseph Grosso
Frederick Hatton
Lawrence Hughes
Brent Humphries
Jesse James Pugh
Eddie Polanco

Hakim Jefferson
Maleek Jones
Manuel Lujan
Kelvin Martinez
Taylor Mason
Jacquelo Medina
Quincy Mitchell
Cynthia Nixon
James Tobin
Carl Tomlin
Angel Casanova
Josue Rivera

James Raynor
Miguel Rojas
Reuben Roman
Miguel Sanchez
Victor Santiago
Kenneth Sells
Kevin Shuff
Jory Strizich
Maurice Snowden

The following testified in support of this bill and on behalf on a family member or friend. They feel that their family member/friend has changed as they were young when they were convicted and deserve a second chance.

Linda Cusano testified on behalf of her son
Samuel Ellis testified on behalf of Ricardo Myers
Anthony Ellis testified on behalf of Joseph Joyner
Lisa Evans testified on behalf of CJ.
Tina Floyd testified on behalf of Duane Johnson
Shatoya Fluitt testified on behalf of Marcus Moye
Don and Sheila Freitag testified on behalf of Kyle Freitag
Jackie Gagne testified on behalf of Ganesh Bharrat
Moersha Gayle testified on behalf of Tajay Chambers
Tamira GreyWolf testified on behalf of her son
Ramiel Hargett testified on behalf of Marcus Moye
Dianne Hernandez testified on behalf of an anonymous loved one
Ernestine Barnes testified on behalf of Marcus Moye
Roy Jackson testified on behalf of Zackery Cody Franklin
Joann Cantamessa testified on behalf of Peter Manfredonia
Vincent Jenkins testified on behalf of Wayne Radney
Eric M. Amado, Jr. testified on behalf of his father
Jamie Anderson testified on behalf of Zackery Cody Franklin
Danela Joseph testified on behalf of Tajay Chambers
Tiphanny Taylor testified on behalf of Keith Taylor
Nathan Johnston testified on behalf of Michael Chandler
Shawn Lehoux testified on behalf of a cousin
Karla Liciaga testified on behalf of her friend Garfield
Antonio Lisboa testified on behalf of his uncle
Raymond Morris testified on behalf of Marcus Moye
Adrijana testified on behalf of Noah Hendron

Jeyriannette Pantoja testified on behalf of her friend Rafael
Hasumati Patel testified on behalf of Niraj Patel
Tracie Stuttles testified on behalf of Marcus Moye
Abdallah Thiam testified on behalf of Anthonne Sharpe
Olivia Turner testified on behalf of Kareem Mack
Dorothy Vaccaro testified on behalf of her son
Julitza Velez testified on behalf of her brother
Caitlin Castro testified on behalf of her husband Luis Castro
Melissa Castro testified on behalf of her son
Shemelia Chambers testified on behalf of Tajay Chambers
Alvin Rodriguez testified on behalf of John Vivo
Carissa Romo testified on behalf of her fiancé
Jullissa Rose testified on behalf of Tajay Chambers
Tracy Schmaker testified on behalf of her son
Renata Smith testified on behalf of Ricardo Myers
Randall Peck testified on behalf of women from York Correctional that he works
with daily
Nancy Peters, Organizer, Brothers and Sisters United testified on behalf of
unknown

The following testified in support of this bill. They are currently incarcerated and were convicted before the age of 26. Many have spent decades in prison and believe they are not the same person that they were at that young age. People do change. They have participated in programs, become educated and learned many skills which they feel would allow them to be productive members of society.

Carlton Bryan
Deondre Bowden
Rayshaun Bugg
Andre Cinicola
John Claudio
Zackery Cody Franklin
Ricardo Collins
Melissa O'Connor
Ivan Diaz
James Dixon
Sean Dowden
Antoney Drummond
Early Dontay
Mark Edwards
Terrell Evans
Kadafie Fernandez
Michael Foster
Zackary Cody Franklin
Levar Frasier
Kyle Freitag
Anthony Furs
Leroy Gettes
Norman Gaines, Jr.

Francis Giannelli
John Godfrey
Victor Gonzalez
Jaquan Graham
Damarquis Gray
Norman Haudhey
Norman Haughey
Evan Holmes
David Hugh
Antonio Inglis
Pharoah Jackson
Ganesh Bharrat
Robert Bullock
Ian Cook
Eric Amado
Peter Manfredonia
Miguel Zapata
Donele Taylor
Keith Taylor
Jhonel Telemin
Anthony Johnson
Prince Jones
Joseph Joyner

Jabbar Kareem
Edward Lamont
Maurice Lawrence
Demario Lawson
Christopher Lisboa
Jose Lopez
Treizy Lopez
Julian Marquez
Robert Marrow
Tommie Martin
Madelyn Martinez
Rafael Medrano
Kezlyn Mendez
Khari Miller
Garth Minto
Jarquez Moore
John T. Morgan
Ricardo Myers
Nicholas Newton
Jessica Nichols
Marco Noqueras
Wilfredo Oquendo
Ashley Pace

<u>Niraj Patel</u> <u>Salvador Perez</u> <u>Shanta Perry</u> <u>Marquis Pettaway</u> <u>Anthony Nicholas Brunetti</u> <u>Milton Daniels, Jr.</u> <u>Steven DeBow</u> <u>Raymond DeJesus</u> <u>Robert DeJesus</u> <u>Emanuel Webb</u> <u>Bryant Wilson</u> <u>John Yates</u> <u>Patrick Young</u> <u>Allen Matthew Davis</u> <u>Mohamad Rahim</u> <u>Jose Ramos</u> <u>Julio Ramos</u> <u>Deykevios Russaw</u> <u>Shannon Sampieri</u>	<u>Garfield Sanderson</u> <u>Carl Tomlin</u> <u>Deonte Tomlinson</u> <u>Hector Torres</u> <u>Stanton Trent</u> <u>Kurtis TurnerJo</u> <u>Matthew Tyrell</u> <u>Anthony Velez</u> <u>Vincent Verderame</u> <u>Michael J. Stokes, Jr.</u> <u>John Vivo, III</u> <u>Scott Smith</u> <u>Michael Reddick</u> <u>Delvin Rodriguez</u> <u>Richard Stevenson</u> <u>Reginald Reese</u> <u>Michael Stokes</u> <u>Reginald J. Reese</u> <u>William Schnaidt</u>	<u>Joseph Stokes</u> <u>Julio Rodriguez</u> <u>Ramon Rodriguez</u> <u>Fernando Rosa</u> <u>David Rosario</u> <u>Julio Rosario</u> <u>Dwayne Sayles</u> <u>Garfield Sanderson</u> <u>Eric Steiger</u> <u>Scott Smith</u> <u>Shawn Smith</u> <u>Andres Sosa</u> <u>Alfred Stephenson</u> <u>Ja'ziah Smith</u> <u>Justin Surkyka</u>
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Marc Donald, CEO, Catalyst CT: Mr. Donald testified in support of the bill, highlighting the importance of acknowledging the well-established science which displays that adolescents often engage in risky behavior, impulsivity, and poor judgement that they may not understand. Oftentimes adolescents cause harm not due to fixed criminality, but due to immaturity, trauma, lack of support and executive functioning. This bill would ensure that developmental science and rehabilitative evidence are at the forefront of parole and sentencing considerations, with renewed emphasis on indicators of growth (i.e. remorse, maturity, service to others, educational advancement, etc.) which closely align with the rehabilitative milestones monitored by Catalyst CT.

Thomas Burr, Public Policy Manager, NAMI Connecticut: Burr testified in support of the bill, citing research from the University of Cambridge which underscores that the prefrontal cortex responsible for decision-making and personality does not fully develop and mature until around the age of 32. Subsequently, NAMI stresses that individuals convicted of crimes may merit some consideration and leniency regarding the length of incarceration, given the research on brain development, and that the bill effectively promotes public safety while making meaningful juvenile justice reforms.

Emily Knox, Research and Policy Director, CT Voices for Children and Christina Quaranta, Executive Director, CT Justice Alliance: Knox and Quaranta testified in support of the bill, which they believes to be reflective of the growing body of research which emphasizes that the prefrontal cortex - responsible for judgment, impulse control, and long-term decision-making—continues developing into the mid-twenties. Knox and Quaranta note that several other states, including Rhode Island, Illinois, California, and Vermont have passed laws which enable for parole review for individuals under 26 and encourages Connecticut to follow suit.

Jess Zaccagnino, Policy Counsel, ALCU CT: Zaccagnino testified in support of the bill, highlighting that Black and Latine adolescents are incarcerated at rates disproportionate to their share of Connecticut's population, and there will subsequently be an outsized benefit to Black and Latine adolescents, if passed. Zaccagnino stresses that emerging adult parole eligibility is not a "get-out-of-jail-free" provision; individuals are required to serve a majority of their sentence, display sustained rehabilitation, assume responsibility for the harm caused and encounter rigorous, discretionary review by the parole board.

Branford Buchta, Secretary, Connecticut Criminal Defense Lawyers Association and Ronald Cusano, Fiona Doherty: The aforementioned individuals testified in support of the bill, calling the eligibility requirement that limits the application of Public Act 23-169 to offenders who were sentenced before October 1, 2005 "arbitrary." They state that this provision has no rational basis and precludes over 100 incarcerated individuals who would otherwise be eligible for early release based on date of offense.

Eddie Abernathy Jr., Travis Babcock, Tijuan Bibson, Bernard Brandon, Daniel Carter, Jean-Luc Bruny, Raymond Clark, Francisco Cruz: The aforementioned members of Cheshire Correctional institution's HONOR program testified in support of the bill, stressing that it represents a good start for young adults who entered incarceration in their late teens and early twenties the chance to reenter society.

Alica Alamo, Ismael Alamo, Dominique Bigger, Bobby Beale, Jamal Coltherst, Gary Cooke, Jessica Coto, Boris Dezik, Emmanuel Dominguez: The aforementioned testified in support of the bill, underscoring the need to remove the arbitrary sentencing cutoff of October 1, 2005, which has unfairly excluded many currently incarcerated people from parole consideration. Removal of the cutoff would not guarantee anyone's release, but rather permit impacted individuals to come before the Board of Pardons and Paroles, present their progress on rehabilitation and be evaluated on who they are today, rather than their worst mistake in the past.

Arthur Aldrich: Aldrich testified in support of the bill, illuminating that the criminal justice sentence has failed to recognize the progress that incarcerated individuals have made in their rehabilitation. The stated that the Public Defender's Office has a growing caseload and insufficient staff to provide meaningful legal representation.

Mark Ambrose, Eric Amado, Brandon Bellamy, Shaquan Armour, Robert Bullock, Michael Birch, Juan Botello, Derrick Bouknight, Marco Camacho, Jared Charles, Ulises Collazo, Ian Cooke, Nicholas Crawford, Idris Elaborate, Epifanio Ayala: The aforementioned testified in support of the bill, sharing that it would give young people the chance to reenter society as law-abiding citizens, an opportunity that they all wish they were afforded, given ongoing incarceration for several decades. While they may have committed horrific crimes that they take full responsibility for, they believe that they should be granted a second chance for redemption. They also note participation in meaningful employment, education, and other development programs.

Jenna Alavero, Jamie Anderson, Svetlana Baidak, Linette Caban Joann Cantamessa, Arlene Carrington, Mery Concepcion, Linda Cusano: The aforementioned testified in support of the bill, each having an incarcerated family member, who they believe should be reevaluated and given a second chance given their rehabilitation amid incarceration.

Rosalyn Andojar: Andujar testified in support of the bill, emphasizing that efforts to ensure accountability with juvenile justice reform have worked successfully in other states such as Pennsylvania, which has released the highest number of juveniles convicted with life sentences, with only 1.14% reconvicted within 20 months of release.

Matthew Baidak: Baidak testified in support of the bill but requests that the Parole Board accept special circumstances (i.e. prolonged solitary confinement plus mental illness) as circumstances worthy of hearing.

Jenna Bao, Yale Law School: Bao testified in support of the legislation, sharing that she witnessed the injustice of overly punitive sentencing and that incarcerated individuals should have the opportunity to demonstrate their value as community members outside of prison.

Viola Clune: Clune testified in support of the bill, highlighting the relief that could be offered to women, who have been disproportionately incarcerated at higher rates than men and often excluded from the conversation on criminal justice reform.

Janey Davis: This person submitted testimony in support of this bill and says that young people are not beyond redemption and shouldn't be defined forever by decisions made at a young age. They share that a loved one was incarcerated at a young age, and they were able to witness firsthand the transformation that is possible when someone has the opportunity to grow; currently he has an associate degree and is close to completing his bachelor's degree. Their journey is proof that rehabilitation is possible, this bill is hope for others in a similar situation.

Sandra Garrett: This person submitted testimony in support of this bill, they believe that people should not be defined forever by a bad decision they made as a juvenile. People deserve to have a chance to show that they have changed, this bill would offer a way for people incarcerated at a young age to have a chance for redemption.

Luis Santana: This person submitted testimony in support of this bill, sharing their experience as a person incarcerated at a young age. Sharing that at the start of his incarceration, he resisted authority and did not take responsibility for his actions. Later changing his life for the better he is a founding member of the H.O.N.O.R. unit program at the Cheshire Correctional Institution, attained his associates degree and is on track for his bachelor's, and has published his own book. He shares his story to show that growth and change is possible for those who are serious about holding themselves accountable.

Gilbert Aquaye: This person submitted testimony in support of the bill. Arguing that the justice system views breach of law differently depending on the context of how it happened, and that this bill would be an extension of such logic. The human brain continues to develop beyond the current age limit of 21 years of age, and the October 2005 date does not consider this. While he understands the impacts crime has and that victims and their families should always be considered, this testifier believes that society cannot consider victims only. We must consider the circumstances and situation that influences an individual to commit crime, this bill would be a step in the right direction.

Sheila Cooper: This person submitted testimony in support of this bill, sharing the story of their son, Carl Tomlin, and how he has worked to change himself. She states that this bill would not promise release or erase accountability. It would give those like her son the chance to be seen for who they are after rehabilitation.

Roshane Myers: This person submitted testimony in support of this bill, sharing that he is the son of an incarcerated person; Ricardo Myers. He shares that despite his situation he has always remained in his life, highlighting the efforts he makes as a father. This bill would give Ricardo Myers, and others like him, the opportunity to give back and be active members of their communities.

Anonymous 718: This person submitted testimony in support of the bill, citing neuroscience research that shows the human brain and the prefrontal cortex continues to develop well into a person's mid-twenties. They also argue that people can change, and while this bill does not guarantee their release it gives them the opportunity to have their case heard by a parole board after serving substantial time. This bill would also provide balance and cost saving measures as long-term incarceration has a large financial cost.

Anonymous 710: This person submitted testimony in support of the bill, sharing their experience as an incarcerated individual. They share how they have worked to become a better person for himself and his community. This bill would allow the Board of Pardons and parole to consider cases to be eligible for parole where young people make mistakes and put in the work to turn their life around; showing these individuals that their life is not meaningless.

Anonymous 703: This person submitted testimony in support of this bill, sharing that they have seen firsthand how the thought and judgement of young people is still developing. In many cases, incarcerated individuals commit themselves to growth and change while in prison. Prison has its limits, and by allowing the Parole Board to review cases, it would prevent incarcerated people from plateauing in their life development.

Anonymous 700: This person submitted testimony in support of this bill. In their experience working with formerly incarcerated individuals through EMERGE and Neighborhood Housing Services of New Haven, they have seen nothing but positive qualities of these individuals. This bill promotes opportunities and better outcomes for everyone.

Anonymous 765: This person submitted testimony in support of the bill, sharing that through their experience in higher education, they have seen formerly incarcerated people return to their communities changed and wanting to give back. They cite a study from UCONN that shows people incarcerated at a young age would benefit greatly from a similar policy that expanded parole opportunities. Those incarcerated at a young age require guidance, direction, and support from adults.

Anonymous 763: This person submitted testimony in support of this bill. They argue that the carve out should be removed as it prevents around 400 people from being able to come up for parole.

Anonymous 762: This person submitted testimony in support of this bill. They share that the proposed change to 26 years of age is supported by neuroscience and would create a

system that truly emphasizes rehabilitation and fairness. They also argued that the October 2005 date cutoff is arbitrary and discriminatory.

Anonymous 761: This person submitted testimony in support of this bill, claiming that scientific research shows that young brains are still developing. They argue that the October 2005 cutoff should be removed.

Anonymous 757: This person submitted testimony in support of this bill, arguing that the October 2005 carve out causes differential treatment based on an arbitrary date; removing this would restore fairness and consistency. This bill would also be an effective cost saving measure as housing incarcerated people for extended periods of time has significant costs.

Anonymous 756: This person submitted testimony in support of this bill, sharing their experience of being in a long-distance relationship with an incarcerated person. This bill would be a step toward a more just and humane society by allowing people incarcerated at a young age to have the chance for real change.

Anonymous 751: This person submitted testimony in support of this bill. They are only two years beyond the current age limit and are terrified to think that only a few years prior they could have been sentenced for life without parole.

Anonymous 752: This person submitted testimony in support of this bill, the change proposed in this bill would create opportunities for incarcerated individuals to move forward in creating positive change to be successful law-abiding citizens. They argue for the removal of the October 2005 cutoff date, stating that it will expand parole eligibility for more incarcerated people. This bill would change lives for the better and reflect fair justice with the intent to develop incarcerated people.

Anonymous 779: This person submitted testimony in support of this bill, sharing that they have experienced firsthand the pain of having a loved one incarcerated for a long period of time. This bill would mean that families are no longer invisible and would mean real change for those incarcerated.

Anonymous 819: This person submitted testimony in support of this bill. They share the story of their relationship of a man named Raymond who is currently incarcerated, and how he has changed while incarcerated. This bill would allow people like Raymond at a chance to experience real connection with those not incarcerated.

Anonymous 807: This person submitted testimony in support of this bill, sharing that their son was incarcerated at a young age and has transformed into a mentor and student. This bill would give families like theirs hope that their children can come home as a changed person.

Anonymous 806: This person submitted testimony in support of this bill, sharing their experience representing young men and women who made life-altering mistakes. They are treated the same as a 45-year-old career criminal. This bill is a move toward a more nuanced, individualized justice system.

The following individuals submitted testimony stating that they are currently incarcerated and have worked to better themselves. The emphasized how much they would benefit from the program and changes included in the bill:

Anonymous 784 (Jalem Faucette-Smith), Anonymous 785 (Derek Maia), Anonymous 821 (Christopher Vincenti), Anonymous 790

Other testimony: Due to the quantity of testimony received for this bill, it is not possible to provide a written summary for each individual submission. Of the remaining testimonies in support of the bill, the following was expressed:

34 pieces of testimony were submitted in support of this bill.

35 pieces of testimony were submitted in support of this bill citing the research that human brains do not reach maturity until the mid-20's. The individuals who commit the crimes as young adults before the age of 26 often lack the judgement and decision-making skills acting impulsively. They can and do change so deserve a second chance.

20 pieces of testimony were submitted in support of this bill citing that these young individuals who commit crimes before the age of 26 deserve a second chance.

12 pieces of testimony were submitted in support, citing that the date of October 1, 2005, in the current law is an arbitrary date and should be removed.

3 pieces of testimony were submitted in support of this bill citing it is humane to allow these individuals to be considered for parole, but that this does not and should not remove accountability. This does not guarantee release.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Jerry Cincotta: Cincotta testified in opposition to the bill, highlighting that it will make it easier for special sentencing and parole eligibility when crime is already a problem. He also adds that a majority of crime is committed by repeat offenders and must be acknowledged and acted upon.

Linda Dalessio: Dalessio testified in opposition to the bill, emphasizing that the proposed changes in parole eligibility will make cities less safe, by increasing gang activity among young adults.

Deb Martinez: Martinez testified in opposition to the bill, concerned that the state does not have enough data on the individuals who were granted early parole under the legislation passed in 2023. Martinez also adds that the Board of Pardons and Paroles likely does not have the resources necessary to fully verify the information placed before them for consideration. Finally, she stresses that restorative justice and healing needs to include everyone, including the victims whose pain should not be diminished.

Alton Blodgett, Brittany Landry, Roy Downey: Blodgett and Downey testified in opposition of the bill, stressing that the individuals in question are legally adults and should be held

responsible for their actions. Early release of individuals convicted of serious crimes undermines justice for their victims and families and threatens public safety.

Brittany West: She testified in opposition to the bill; argued against extending the age threshold, emphasizing accountability, and stating that punishment should match the severity of the crime. She asserted that leniency undermines deterrence and urged prioritizing justice for victims and their families over expanded parole eligibility.

Jamie Leclerc: Jamie Leclerc opposes this bill. They believe that at the age of 26, you're an adult and should be responsible for their actions. They believe this bill weakens accountability.

Sharleen Newell: Sharleen strongly opposes this bill. Her sister and her sister's child were shot by a 25-year-old; her sister died of the gunshot wound and her niece was severely injured and has lifelong injuries. Though she never had to face the person who committed the crime in court as he took his own life, their lives have been forever changed and the grief is immense. She feels we need stricter regulations to hold criminals accountable.

Other testimony: Due to the quantity of testimony received for this bill, it is not possible to provide a written summary for each individual submission. Of the remaining testimonies in opposition to the bill, the following was expressed:

4 pieces of testimony were submitted in opposition to this bill.

Reported by: Kyle Zingler, Bonnie Gray, James Finlay, Trevor Ellis, Justin Lamoreaux

Date: April 19, 2026