



April 28, 2023

Ellen McDaniel

Committee Administrator - DFL Caucus  
520 State Office Building  
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
Saint Paul Minnesota 55155

Dear Committee Administrator McDaniel:

[FAMM](#) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that advocates sentencing policies that are individualized and fair, protect public safety, and preserve families. We write to encourage you to include HF 1300 in the Public Safety Omnibus bill. HF 1300 will end the practice of sentencing children to die in Minnesota prisons. It will also provide a second look opportunity to juveniles who are currently serving life without the possibility of parole.

I can personally speak to how this bill can work successfully. I was incarcerated for 31 years under a life without parole sentence I received as a juvenile. Fortunately, a legislative change in Louisiana similar to this bill allowed my state to take a second look at the sentence and determine if it was still appropriate. After satisfying the parole board that I was rehabilitated, no longer posed a threat to public safety, and had taken accountability for my crime, I was released under supervision. I have been home two and a half years now.

Since my release I have been gainfully employed and I'm now a taxpayer, not a tax burden. I have purchased a home. I use my personal experience to help others make positive life choices and follow a path of redemption. I serve as a public speaker to college students about my crime, incarceration, and rehabilitation. I also participate with a local youth advocacy group as a mentor to those who in contact with the justice system.

A life without parole sentence is extreme because it completely denies that people can change; that they are not forever the worst decision they made. To impose such a sentence upon a child is contrary to our ideals and morals. These young people can change and become worthy of a second chance. The beauty of this bill is that it does not release anyone who has not truly earned that chance.

I am a living example of how this bill can be successful, and I am not the only one. There are currently close to 1,000 former juvenile lifers across the country. Bills such as these can and do work.



1100 H Street NW, Suite 1000 • Washington, D.C. 20005



(202) 822-6700



[www.famm.org](http://www.famm.org)

Thank you for considering our views. Please contact me with any questions or to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

Bryan Widenhouse  
Policy Associate, [FAMM](#)  
[Bwidenhouse@famm.org](mailto:Bwidenhouse@famm.org)