

Maine PRISONER ADVOCACY Coalition



February 24, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Jan Collins, I am Assistant Director of Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition (MPAC) an organization committed to ethical, positive, and humane changes in Maine's prison system.

I am here in opposition to **LD 535 An Act to Authorize Judicial Disposition of a Juvenile Adjudicated of Murder or a Class A Crime to a Term of Confinement Extending Beyond age 21**

The United States is virtually alone among nations in sentencing juveniles to life and virtual life sentences.

However, there is some hope that this trend may be changing. The Supreme Court has reasoned that juveniles are different from adults in three ways:

1. they are more likely to take risks
2. less able to extricate themselves from peer pressure (especially negative ones)
3. less able to foresee the consequences of their actions and feel remorse for them

These features are a natural part of adolescence, as people develop into adulthood they fall away.¹

Because the brains of young people are not fully developed they also have the greatest potential for change, redemption and rehabilitation.

As a result of recent research in adolescent brain development. Many states are reconsidering their treatment of juveniles. By making their sentencing less lenient² Maine should follow the neurological science and do the same.

Please oppose this bill. A life is a terrible thing to waste.

With appreciation,

Jan

1Mauer, Marc and Nellis, Ashley. The Meaning of Life. The New Press. NY.NY. 2018

2 Becker, Deborah. **Adults younger than 21 cannot be sentenced to life without parole, Mass. high court rules**

<https://www.mainepublic.org/2024-01-11/adults-21-and-younger-cannot-be-sentenced-to-life-without-parole-mass-supreme-judicial-court-rules>