



Testimony in support of Support for youth justice reform
SB 1008, SB 969, SB 968, SB 966
Senate Committee on Judiciary
Submitted by Paul Solomon, Executive Director
March 28, 2019

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Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and members of Senate Judiciary Committee:

I write today to express support for the package of youth justice reforms covered in SB 1008, SB 969, SB 968, and SB 966. My name is Paul Solomon and I am the Executive Director at Sponsors, Inc, based in Eugene. I am also the Chair of Lane County's Local Public Safety Coordinating Council (LPSCC) and serve on the Governor's Reentry Council in addition to many other boards related to public safety.

Sponsors, Inc., is a national leader in the delivery of Reentry services. We operate 20 buildings on seven sites in Lane County with over 200 units of housing for men and women with criminal histories and ancillary programs. Sponsors also provides contracted services to adult age youth (18-25) releasing from OYA custody. Many of the individuals we work with experienced their first interactions with the criminal justice system as youth. In many situations, those experiences had an outsized impact on their lives. In particular, when children are convicted as adults, they carry the consequences and stigma of an adult criminal conviction. This creates barriers to finding housing, employment, and gaining access to higher education.

At Sponsors we believe that our youth justice system should focus more on prevention and rehabilitation. Brain and behavioral research shows us that young people have a great ability to grow and change and that treatment and education programs, not prisons, are the best way to help youth make better choices. As a state, we should ensure that youth have the opportunity to learn from their experiences and move on to lead productive, successful lives.

There are four proposals in front of the legislature this session that focus on prevention and rehabilitation for youth in the criminal justice system. We urge your support of all four and appreciate your consideration.

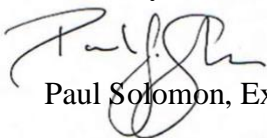
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- **SB 969 (End Automatic Waiver into Adult Court)** places youth accused of any crimes in the juvenile justice system instead of the adult justice system. To move a youth to the adult justice system, prosecutors would need to request a special hearing with a judge who would decide where youth are placed.
- **SB 966 (Hearing Before Transfer to DOC)** would require an additional review before a youth with a long sentence would be transferred to an adult prison. Currently, Oregon youth who are given long sentences can stay in a youth prison until age twenty-five and are then transferred to an adult prison. This proposal would allow a judge to determine if the twenty-five-year old has been sufficiently rehabilitated to transfer them to community-based supervision, rather than adult prison.
- **SB 1008 (Second Look Hearings)** establishes a process where all youth who are convicted in adult court have access to a "Second Look" hearing half way through their sentence. At that hearing, a judge determines whether the youth has taken responsibility for their crime and been rehabilitated, which would allow the remainder of their sentence to be served under community-based supervision, rather than being incarcerated.
- **SB 968 (End Juvenile Life Without Parole)** would eliminate life without parole sentences for youth in Oregon by establishing a process to ensure that anyone convicted of a crime when they are under eighteen years old receives a chance for parole after fifteen years of incarceration.

Sincerely,



Paul Solomon, Executive Director

