

HB 2904 Creates a 'Second Look' for Youth Treated As Adults in Our Criminal Justice System

“Second Look” is an existing policy that could be made available to youth who commit a Measure 11 offense when they are under the age 18. Under Second Look, youth who have served half of their sentence would have an opportunity to go back before a judge. If the young offender can demonstrate that he or she has made significant changes in his or her life since the original offense, the judge may permit the youth to serve out the rest of their sentence in the community, under post-prison supervision. The young person would still serve the remainder of his or her sentence, but under conditional release.

Second Look recognizes that youth can and do change and transform themselves and therefore our system of justice should not be static and inflexible. By reevaluating the status of juvenile offenders, we give ourselves the opportunity to place youth in the setting where they are most likely to succeed, to not re-offend, and to become productive members of society.

There is a large body of research that suggests treating youth as adults in the criminal justice system is an ineffective strategy to promote public safety.

More than 100 years ago, the country's first juvenile court was created in Chicago with the acknowledgement that youth are not finished products and could greatly benefit from education, mental health treatment, and vocational training unavailable in adult corrections systems.

While intending to be tough, we have forgotten to be smart. As more youth get treated as adults within our criminal justice system, we see their future prospects for school, employment, and productive contributions to society diminish. Additionally, this approach appears to actually increase the likelihood that young offenders will re-offend.

- Adolescents are still developing impulse control, foresight of consequences, and ethical reasoning. They require a different approach to culpability and accountability.
- There is a strong record of youth successfully transforming themselves when given access to developmentally appropriate treatment and programs.
- Research from around the country shows that youth treated in adult court are more likely to re-commit future crime and recidivate.
- Laws around the country acknowledge a difference between adults and adolescents when they prevent juveniles from sitting on juries, voting, and marrying without parental consent. Isn't treating them as adults in the criminal justice system a double standard?

Pass HB 2904. The Future of Our Youth Depends on It.