

STATE SENATOR • LIZ BRATER • 18TH DISTRICT

Brater Press Release

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BRATER APPLAUDS HOUSE ACTION TO INSTITUTE PAROLE ELIGIBILITY FOR JUVENILE OFFENDERS

Bills would give juveniles sentenced to life in prison an opportunity to turn their lives around

LANSING, Mich. - State Sen. Liz Brater (D-Ann Arbor) today applauded the passage of House Bills 4402-4405 that address parole eligibility for juvenile offenders sentenced to life in prison. Brater developed the legislative package, which would prohibit sentencing an individual convicted of a crime before the age of 18 to imprisonment for life without the possibility of parole, in 2006, and introduced it again as her first order of business this session.

“Many of the juveniles receiving this sentence were acting with older codefendants who received lesser sentences. Many were abandoned or neglected, or had untreated mental illness,” said Brater. “It is important that the 300 people in our prison system who were sentenced as children to life without parole receive a second chance by giving them an opportunity to go before the parole board.”

The four-bill package of legislation would amend the penal code to prohibit the sentencing of juvenile offenders to life without parole eligibility. Michigan currently has one of the highest populations of minors sentenced to life without the possibility of parole. The laws that exist now mandate life without parole sentences even in cases of felony murder when the convicted child is not the central perpetrator of the crime.

Over the past few years, Brater has been working with child advocacy and civil rights organizations to develop laws that will ensure children who commit violent crimes get a second chance at life. Brater introduced a similar legislative package that would prohibit sentencing an individual convicted of a crime before the age of 18 to imprisonment for life without the possibility of parole.

“We are currently spending \$1 million a year to keep these people in prison-money that could be redirected to programs for youth that could help prevent criminal activity,” said Brater.

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