**JC/DC ACTION ALERT: Life Without Parole**

[HB 1995](http://www.house.mo.gov/billsummary.aspx?bill=HB1995&year=2016&code=R) has passed out of committee and will soon be voted on by the Missouri House.

HB 1995 provides a well thought out and balanced approach to our state’s current law regarding life without parole for juveniles. Currently our state’s law is out of alignment with the U.S. Supreme Courts rulings on these types of sentences.

Missouri PTA believes those convicted of First Degree Murder, even if under the age of 18, should be dealt with harshly. But, when dealing with youth offenders there does exist a consensus that children are not the same as adults and therefore should not be treated similarly. In Missouri life in prison is defined as after 30 years. This bill allows for sentencing options of terms between 25 to 40 years. It also establishes parole boards designed to deal with these cases.

*Dear Representative,*

*PTA recognizes the need to bring our current law into alignment with the U.S. Supreme Court decision in Miller v. Alabama and subsequent decision in Montgomery v. Louisiana regarding the sentencing of juveniles to life in prison. As a concerned constituent and PTA member, I support House Bill 1995.*

*The U.S. Supreme Courts ruled that sentencing courts must “take into account how children are different, and how those differences council against irrevocably sentencing them to a lifetime in prison.” The court also noted that children are different from adults. While they are more immature in brain development they simultaneously have more aptitude for reform and rehabilitation than adults.*

*HB 1995 provides a well-balanced approach between sentencing and allowing for the possibility of reformation. This bill would eliminate life without the possibility for parole for children under 18 while still imposing sentencing term options between 25-40 years. Judges, juries, and parole boards would be required to consider youth-related mitigating factors. Also included in the bill is the establishment of a procedure to petition for review of sentences for those children previously sentenced to life without parole.*

*The Missouri Model has long been the national model with regard to state juvenile justice systems. Please vote yes on HB 1995 and help us create meaningful correction to our current state law.*

*Sincerely,*

*You name and PTA*

Not sure how to contact your state legislators? [Click here](http://www.senate.mo.gov/LegisLookup/Default.aspx) and insert your street address or 9-digit zip code.

 **Dorothy Gardner**

Missouri PTA

President Elect

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