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

[SB 590](http://www.senate.mo.gov/16info/BTS_Web/Bill.aspx?SessionType=R&BillID=22246617) has passed out of committees and will soon be voted on by the Missouri Senate.

SB 590 would attempt to remedy the State’s problem with our current law regarding the life without parole sentencing of youth by simply imposing mandatory minimum sentencing.

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. Children do not possess the same mental capacity or maturity as adults to comprehend the severity of their actions. When sentencing, Judges should be allowed the flexibility to weight mitigating circumstances such as, but not limited to, the child’s role in the crime, mental capacity and maturity, and abuse and violence in the child’s home.

*Dear Senator,*

*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. In that respect our organization supports House Bill 1995 that has passed out of committee and is on the House bills for perfection.*

*The mandatory sentencing outlined in SB 590 – 50 years for children 16 and 17 years of age, and 35 years for children under 16 – is still essentially a life sentence for a child. The bill does not set for policy by which judges and parole boards can consider mitigating factors that contributed to the actions committed by the child. This does not fall in line with the U.S. Supreme Courts ruling 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.*

*The Missouri Model has long been the national model with regard to state juvenile justice systems. Let us retain that role model status by voting no in opposition to SB 590.*

*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**

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