



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

May 24, 2019

Dear Chief Clerk Sekerak,

I write to explain my vote on Senate Bill 1008.

Twenty-five years ago, the voters of Oregon passed Ballot Measure 11, setting mandatory minimum sentences for a range of crimes - those sentences range from five years and ten months to 30 years to life. Included in this measure was the requirement that children 15 and older, charged with the listed felonies, be tried as adults.

In the 25 years since this measure passed, we have learned a lot about brain science and chemistry, how children develop, and why the system is not currently working as intended. For instance, we now know that children's brains are not fully developed until they are in their 20s. Science has noted the ability for significant change and growth during developmental years. When we rehabilitate youth who have committed crimes, but then send them to DOC on their 25th birthday without a second look, we not only risk undoing our investments in them, but we also increase their chances of recidivism.

This simple, common sense legislation is about making things more fair and equitable to ensure our system is focused on redemption and rehabilitation. This legislation repeals the unconstitutional portions of existing law, shifts the decision whether or not to charge a child as an adult to a judge instead of a prosecutor, and gives youth offenders the opportunity to be rehabilitated.

I was 15-years-old when Measure 11 passed in 1994. I am grateful that when voters voted for those tough on crime policies, they also voted to give the legislature Measure 10, a tool to remedy problems if the policies are found not to work. With consensus among representatives that sending rehabilitated youth offenders to DOC facilities is not best practice to reduce reoffending, and that statistics show us that our juvenile offenders of color are disproportionately charged as adults with Measure 11 crimes as compared to white offenders who have committed the same crime, we know the system is broken.

Senate Bill 1008 is about using the information we now have to better inform how we hold children accountable and ensure that the ones who can be are ultimately rehabilitated into productive members of society.

Sincerely,

Representative Courtney Neron

