



LIFE WITHOUT PAROLE

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DESCRIPTION

More than one out of ten people incarcerated in Massachusetts is serving a Life Without Parole sentence (LWOP). Foreclosing the opportunity to ever apply for parole not only strips them of hope and denies their capacity to rehabilitate, LWOP sentences waste public resources and do not actually promote public safety. An Act to Reduce Mass. Incarceration would allow all people serving life sentences the opportunity for a parole hearing after serving 25 years, and it would apply retroactively so that it would impact currently incarcerated people.

WHY THIS MATTERS

A result of long sentences like life without parole our prison population is aging. As of Jan. 1, 2020, over 12% of the DOC population is over the age of 60. Not only do people age out of crime, but it is also two to three times more expensive to house an elderly prisoner than an average prisoner in the general population. The prison system is not designed or equipped to properly care for the elderly, sick, and dying.

LWOP does not further any pecuniary goals.

- **Not a deterrent.** It has been proven that the severity of the punishment does not actually deter criminal activity.
- **Not rehabilitative.** Permanent incarceration without parole gives up on a person's ability to ever rehabilitate.
- **Not retributive.** Life without parole does not make society better and is a contradiction to the notion of restorative justice.

We are often told that we have to continue LWOP sentencing to be fair to victims and appropriately punish offenders. This is a false dichotomy and making policy on this basis is inconsistent with public safety. **The most incarcerated corridors of the Commonwealth are also the most victimized, and LWOP sentences deny the reality that restorative justice has provided more healing to victims than denying redemption through lifelong incarceration.**

In general, **one's proclivity to commit crime, including murder, is highly age-dependent.** The peak age is in one's early to mid-twenties, and continues to decline as one ages. It makes little sense to mandate that a person in their twenties must stay in prison for the rest of their life without a chance to later determine if they still pose a threat to public safety. Incarcerating people who pose no threat is a waste of resources.

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