SUMMARY

This bill promotes fair sentencing for youth who find themselves involved in the juvenile justice system. It gives youth a future. Specifically, it prevents courts from lengthening certain mandatory-minimum sentences based on a person’s actions as a child (i.e. juvenile court adjudications).

HISTORY OF JUVENILE SENTENCING

The late Chief Justice Gants, in a concurring opinion joined by current Chief Justice Budd, urged “the Legislature to consider the wisdom and fairness of the mandatory-minimum aspect of those enhanced sentences, especially where the predicate offenses were committed when the defendant was a juvenile.” Id. at 332. Passing this bill would honor the memory of Justice Gants and his commitment to justice for all.

WHY THIS BILL MATTERS

Black and Latinx youth are more likely than white youth to be advanced through the juvenile justice system - rather than being diverted at most decision points through formal or informal resolutions of their cases. Black and Latinx youth are 1.526 and 2.46 times, respectively, more likely than white youth to have a delinquency petition. Then, those juvenile adjudications follow them into adulthood, leading to more severe punishment for Black and Latinx adults.

It’s time to right this wrong. A diverse group of organizations support this criminal justice reform bill.

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