

Restore Justice Foundation

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://restorejustice.org/house-committee-holding-subject-matter-hearing-on-felony-murder-reform/>

Campaign and Advocacy

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Illinois Felony-Murder Rule Harms Individuals, Families, & Communities

SPRINGFIELD-The Judiciary Criminal Law Committee chaired by Representative Justin Slaughter is holding a **subject matter hearing on Wednesday, November 13 at 9 a.m. in D-1 of the Stratton Building** to discuss Illinois felony-murder law. This is the first legislative reaction to the August Lake County Five case. In that case, five Chicago teenagers were charged with first-degree murder after a homeowner shot and killed a sixth teenager while the youth were attempting to steal an automobile.

Illinois has one of the broadest felony-murder statutes in the country. The law allows a person to be charged and convicted of first-degree murder even if they did not kill or intend to kill anyone. A felony-murder conviction carries a minimum sentence of 20 years and a possible maximum sentence of natural life.

HB1615, sponsored by Chairman Slaughter, would amend the law to:

Senator Robert Peters has filed identical legislation in the Senate, SB2292.

On Wednesday, people directly affected by the felony-murder rule will share their stories.

Youthful offenders are disproportionately burdened by the current felony-murder rule, as they are more likely to act in groups and are more susceptible to peer pressure. The part of the brain that assesses risk is among the last to form.

In the Lake County case, prosecutors charged the teenagers with the murder of their own family member and friend despite none of them having pulled the trigger. While we were grateful the charges were dropped, it's time to make sure this part of the law can't be used to overcharge others.

When children or young adults are charged with felony-murder, they are branded violent offenders for life and are subject to adult court, adult prison sentences, and the same sentencing range as the person who pulled the trigger. Once convicted, these people have no ability to demonstrate rehabilitation and seek shorter sentences. Research has proven long sentences don't deter crime. They don't make our communities safer.

Supporters of HB1615

ACLU of Illinois

Cabrini Green Legal Aid

Chicago Appleseed Fund for Justice

Chicago Coalition for the Homeless

Chicago Community Bond Fund

Chicago Urban League

Chicago Council of Lawyers

John Howard Association

Justice Advisory Council

Law Office of the Cook County Public Defender

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Shriver Center on Poverty Law

Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities

Unitarian Universalist Advocacy Network of Illinois

Unitarian Universalist Prison Ministry of Illinois

Womens Justice Institute

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Restore Justice advocates for fairness, humanity, and compassion throughout the Illinois criminal justice system, with a primary focus on those affected by extreme sentences imposed on our youth. We create and support policies that allow those who are rehabilitated to go home, and that ensure those incarcerated, their families, and victim families have opportunities for healing and justice. We engage currently and formerly incarcerated individuals and their families, victims and their families, communities, and concerned Illinoisans in advocacy and service within the criminal justice system.

Im trying to find out how to help my friend get his sentence reduced or at least get a parole hearing. He was present when his brother committed a murder. He didnt know that this would happen. He received the same sentence his brother did. He has no criminal history before this happened. He was 21 at the time. His brother told him if he snitched the same thing would happen to him. But he couldnt live with what happened and went to the local police and told them what happened. He may not have been completely truthful the first time they questioned him but he did eventually. I have read the court documents and there are inconsistencies in the eyewitness account of what happened. He has served 14 of the 45yrs of his sentence. How do I go about finding help for him?

Restore Justice Foundation

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