

MEDIA ALERT

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New Law Streamlines Parole Process for Children and Young People in Illinois

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Governor JB Pritzker signed [House Bill 2546](#) into law on August 15, 2025, clarifying the parole hearing eligibility timeline in the Youthful Parole Act. This measure ensures people can have their youthful parole cases reviewed by the Prisoner Review Board when they are eligible.

The [2019 Youthful Parole Act](#) created the first new parole opportunities in Illinois since parole was abolished in 1978, allowing people 20 and younger coming into prison with extreme sentences ahead of them to petition for a parole hearing once they have served a certain number of years. Children and young people who were 20 and younger at the time of the offense can start preparing for parole review by filing a petition up to three years before they are eligible. The Prisoner Review Board sets a parole hearing date three years from the date it received the petition.

However, in some cases, a person files their petition *after* they have already served the required time and are immediately eligible for a hearing. This has caused some confusion when they file a petition, whether the parole hearing can take place within a year or if they must wait three years for a hearing. House Bill 2546 clarifies that a person eligible to petition for youthful parole can file a petition up to three years before becoming eligible, and the hearing can be scheduled one year in advance.

House Bill 2546 strengthens the existing Youthful Parole Act by ensuring that eligible people can access parole hearings on the correct timeline and not have to remain incarcerated longer while they wait for their hearings.

“This legislation ensures the original intent of the Youthful Parole Act is fulfilled: to give children and young people serving extreme sentences who have transformed their lives a real chance at redemption, without unnecessary delays as they prepare for a hearing,” said **Lindsey Hammond**, Restore Justice Policy Director. “We’re grateful to the lawmakers who supported this vital revision.”

This legislation does not change the current practice of the Prisoner Review Board. The measure does not change any of the protections or shorten any of the timelines for State's Attorney or victim notification.

Representative Will Guzzardi and Senator Javier Cervantes sponsored the measure.

"Children and young people have the greatest capacity for change," said **Representative Guzzardi** (D-Chicago). "I'm proud to sponsor this legislation to ensure eligible persons have a chance to show who they have become on a clear timeline, and do not have to wait longer than the law intends for that opportunity."

"Young people who have done their time and worked to better themselves deserve to re-enter their communities when they are eligible so they can be better set up for a more successful future," said **Senator Cervantes** (D-Chicago). "This measure clears up confusion around the timeline young people are eligible for parole so they can begin a fresh start as soon as they are able to."

Restore Justice, which comprises [Restore Justice Foundation](#) and [Restore Justice Illinois](#), works to address issues faced by those serving life or de-facto life sentences, their families, and their communities. Founded in 2015 by a dedicated group of advocates that included the late former Congressman, Federal Judge, and White House Counsel Abner Mikva, Restore Justice trains and supports advocates, conducts research, nurtures partnerships, and develops policy solutions that will roll back ineffective "tough on crime" policies of the past, replacing them with compassionate, smart, and safe policies for the future.