

I am submitting a copy of my testimony as written though I have signed up to speak virtually. Should I not receive the chance to speak at this hearing due to the unknown time at which I will be allowed to speak, I would still like my testimony to be submitted on this subject and kept in the record and minds of Senators present today.

“Madam Chair Gonzales, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to present to you today. My name is Autumn Schur representing myself, and I am here to support this bill because I believe that hope and change have a place in our criminal legal system.

I have lived in Colorado for four years now and I have witnessed firsthand how broken our carceral system is. My husband is serving a sentence of 54 years for a crime he was wrongfully convicted of. For many in these situations, I call sentences like these “slow death sentences.” Colorado cannot execute individuals anymore, and instead chooses to slowly kill a family unit through long incarceration periods that have no tangible benefit for anyone except the state who can now claim to have “resolved a liability.” This bill changes the narrative.

I can confidently say that the inefficiencies and injustices I’ve witnessed over our tenure in the criminal legal system can only be transformed by **reforming** the very system that we are operating within. I was not permitted to testify for my husband’s freedom. Today I am taking the chance to testify on behalf of him and many others impacted by this bill.

I have made this bill personal for me, but I also want to make it personal for you. If you do not believe that people can change then every person sitting in this room today is defined by their worst moments. The moments you felt like quitting, the moments you felt that the world was too big for you and you would never pave a way, the moments you didn’t know any better. You are defined by that moment. You are no longer a senator sitting in a room, making decisions for a state of people because you kept trying, kept working, kept **reforming** yourself to fit the image of who you wanted to be today.

My hope is that I am addressing a room of **reformed** adults who have fought dark battles and come out on top. My hope is that we can recognize the effort of those who have fought and clawed their way to **‘reformation’** within a system designed to inhibit change. This bill will not only allow second chances for qualified offenders, but it opens a door for those in the system to work harder and keep trying to reach that image of who they want to be. Tangentially, this bill will open a door that holds DOC accountable for providing actual reformation programs and opportunities.

Ask yourselves today how long it took you to claw your way from your darkest hours. Ask yourself if it was enough time to change your heart. Now, tell me why someone else should

not get the chance to prove before a judge that they have done the same. I am not asking you to reduce every sentence of every offender. I am asking you to help me build a justice system that allows people to prove, through acts and with evidence, that they are made new.

Many of you were part of the landmark 2020 bill that abolished Colorado's death penalty, and I am asking you today to make that bill mean something. Hold the justice system accountable for the reformation we claim to provide to those incarcerated.”

Good afternoon, Chair and members of the committee.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak today about second chances and why second-look legislation matters.

My name is Beth Stone. I am here to speak on behalf of my husband, Ryan, and on behalf of the many families in Colorado who live every day with the consequences of extreme sentencing.

Ryan has been incarcerated since 2014. He was 28 years old when he got arrested; young, immature, and he made some terrible mistakes . For a non-homicidal offense, he was sentenced to 160 years under the habitual offender statute. Today, that means he is not eligible for parole until he is 127 years old.

I want to be clear: Ryan takes responsibility for his actions. Accountability matters. But so does growth. And so does the ability to recognize who someone becomes after more than a decade of rehabilitation.

In the twelve years since his incarceration, Ryan has done everything in his power to change. He is a master dog handler, a peer mentor, and has been drug-free for over a decade with zero gang involvement. He is a CrossFit coach and certified personal trainer who uses fitness as a way to mentor others and bring structure and purpose to an environment that often lacks both. He has earned multiple mentoring and fitness certifications and is currently working toward his OCA certification so he can help care for the sick and dying inside DOC.

This is not someone wasting time. This is someone preparing to contribute.

Yet under our current system, none of that matters; because there is no second look. There is no opportunity to evaluate who he is today versus who he was at 28.

Second-look legislation does not guarantee release. It does not erase accountability. It simply allows for review; for courts to consider rehabilitation, growth, and public safety together.

When there is a chance to earn a second look, people work toward becoming better; safer, healthier, more productive human beings. Hope creates responsibility.

Approving this bill gives deserving individuals the opportunity to return home as productive, tax-paying Colorado citizens; as workers, mentors, and family members; rather than keeping people incarcerated long after punishment no longer serves public safety.

While my husband may not qualify under this bill today, passing it sends a powerful message: that Colorado believes in accountability and redemption. That we are willing to look at people as they are now; not only at the worst moment of their lives.

I urge you to support this bill, reduce unnecessary incarceration, and give deserving people the chance to become Colorado citizens again.

Thank you for your time, your leadership, and your willingness to believe in second chances.



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Testimony from:

Logan Seacrest, Resident Fellow, Criminal Justice and Civil Liberties, R Street Institute

In SUPPORT of Senate Bill 26-115, “Concerning Post-Conviction Relief for Certain Offenders Sentenced to Imprisonment”

February 25, 2026

Senate Judiciary Committee

Chair Weissman, Vice-Chair Roberts, and members of the committee,

My name is Logan Seacrest, and I am a resident fellow on the Criminal Justice and Civil Liberties team at the R Street Institute, a nonprofit, nonpartisan public policy research organization. Our mission is to engage in policy research and outreach to promote free markets and limited, effective government. This is why Senate Bill 26-115 is of special interest to us.

SB 26-115 would allow for a resentencing petition if the incarcerated individual committed the offense before the age of 21 and has served at least 20 years, or if the individual is at least 60 years old and has served at least 20 years. This bill provides a measured pathway to reconsider sentences that no longer serve the interests of justice or taxpayers and has the potential to improve public safety by funneling correctional savings into more effective public safety investments.

The number of incarcerated individuals over the age of 55 grew by 123.4 percent between 2002 and 2022, while the general prison population grew by just 8 percent.¹ According to federal data, prisons with a high concentration of elderly inmates spend roughly five times more per person on medical care than those with younger populations.² The fiscal note for SB 26-115 estimates it would reduce state expenditures by hundreds of thousands annually, with the potential for additional long-term savings as prison beds are vacated.³

¹ Colorado Department of Corrections, “Annual Statistical Report FY 2022-2023,” p. 30.
<https://cdoc.colorado.gov/annual-statistical-report>.

² Office of the Inspector General, “The Impact of an Aging Inmate Population on the Federal Bureau of Prisons,” U.S. Department of Justice, May 2015. <https://oig.justice.gov/sites/default/files/reports/15-05.pdf>.

³ Legislative Council Staff, “SB 26-115: Post-Conviction Relief for Certain Offenders,” Fiscal Note, Colorado General Assembly, Feb. 23, 2026. https://leg.colorado.gov/bill_files/112520/download

Beyond the savings, the prospect of eventually getting out of prison can serve as a powerful incentive for rehabilitation. Without meaningful hope of release, prisoners have less reason to improve their lives, pursue education, or engage in prison programming. Second look laws provide a “north star” for long-term prisoners, making clear from the outset that prosocial conduct and personal growth can provide a pathway out of prison. This motivates individuals to comply with correctional authorities and invest in themselves, making institutions safer and improving reentry outcomes.⁴

Importantly, SB 26-115 includes robust safeguards and judicial oversight. The petitioner bears the burden of proving they are no longer a danger, and victims are given the opportunity to be heard before any decision is made. For the most serious crimes—including sex offenses, offenses against children, and those resulting in life without parole—no relief is available unless the prosecution approves.

Fortunately, individuals who qualify for review under this bill pose little risk. In Colorado, the three-year recidivism rate for people between the ages of 50 and 59 is just 8 percent. For those between 60 and 69, it drops to 1.3 percent, and for those over 70, it is 0.2 percent.⁵ These findings are consistent with what criminologists call the “age-crime curve,” which shows that criminal activity peaks in the late teens and early twenties and drops precipitously after age 35. By the time a person has served 20 or more years in prison, the likelihood of reoffending is negligible.

Keeping cells full of prisoners who no longer pose a meaningful risk to public safety has little benefit for Coloradans, but serious implications for the state correctional budget. SB 26-115 will create a legal mechanism to reconsider expensive and unnecessary sentences, freeing up public funds for public safety solutions with a higher return on investment.

We respectfully ask the committee to pass SB 26-115.

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⁴ William Bales and Christine Miller, “The Impact of Determinate Sentencing on Prisoner Misconduct,” *Journal of Criminal Justice* 40:5, September 2012, pp. 394–403.

https://www.academia.edu/85613945/The_impact_of_determinate_sentencing_on_prisoner_misconduct

⁵ Colorado Department of Corrections, “Annual Statistical Report FY 2022-2023,” p. 46.

<https://cdoc.colorado.gov/annual-statistical-report>.

Good morning, Chair and members of the Committee.

My name is Dana Flores and I'm here today in support of SB 26-115, speaking in my capacity as a crime survivor and a member of the CO Youth Justice Collaborative. While much of the debate around "Second Look" legislation focuses on the person incarcerated, I want to speak specifically to how this bill serves the interests of justice, public safety, and survivors of crime. This bill does not guarantee release—it guarantees a look by a judge to see if the person we are holding today is the same person who caused the harm twenty years ago. In the vast majority of these cases, they are not.

For many survivors, "justice" is equated with the length of a sentence. However, as decades pass, most victims report that a "life without parole" sentence creates a frozen state of trauma. By providing a judicial review after 20 years, SB 26-115 introduces a mechanism for restorative justice. It allows for a process where an individual must demonstrate profound transformation and accountability. For many survivors, witnessing that genuine change and receiving an explanation of not just *what* happened, but why it happened, provides a level of healing that cannot be achieved by simply disappearing the person responsible.

We must look at where our public safety dollars are going. Our state budget deficit of 1.2 billion dollars is almost exactly equal to the budget for our Department of Corrections- a department that just received millions in additional funding, even as they are taken to account for misappropriating taxpayer money, slave labor, and starving youth in their care. If there are people who can be released without a threat to public safety, for gods sake let's release them. It is a statistical fact that people who committed crimes as youth "age out" of violence. Data from similar laws in D.C. and California show recidivism rates for this population are near zero.

By passing SB 26-115, we stop spending hundreds of millions to incarcerate individuals who no longer pose a threat. Those resources can then be reallocated to where they are

truly needed: to help all people in Colorado meet their basic needs, to help people to have experienced harm in any form to heal.

True justice for victims isn't just about punishment; it's about a system observant enough to recognize when a person has changed and smart enough to create a mechanism to release that person and reinvest the resources generated into the communities that feed most heavily into the system. I urge a "Yes" vote on SB 26-115.

Thank you.

Good Afternoon Chair and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Noe Picazo. I am a graduate of the Lived Experience Advocacy Fellowship at the National Center for Youth Law, and I am also a young adult who completed a sentence at YOS.

I am here in strong support of SB26-115.

This bill recognizes something that both science and my personal experience have made clear: young people between 18 and 21 are still developing. Their judgment, impulse control, and risk assessment are not fully formed. Yet under current law, many are sentenced to life — or to terms so long they effectively amount to life — for crimes committed during that developmental window.

SB26-115 does not guarantee release. It simply creates the possibility of reconsideration and parole if strict conditions are met. It allows the system to recognize growth, rehabilitation, and accountability over time. That is not soft on crime — it is smart on crime.

From a fiscal standpoint, this bill is strong public policy. Incarcerating someone for decades costs taxpayers millions of dollars, especially as individuals age and require more medical care. Across the country, 15 states have already enacted Second Look statutes that allow for sentence review after lengthy incarceration. The data show these policies are implemented safely and responsibly, with extremely low recidivism rates among those released after a “second look.” Public safety is strengthened, because release is based on demonstrated rehabilitation — not just the passage of time.

SB26-115 aligns our laws with modern understanding of young adult development. Research consistently shows that people age out of crime. The highest-risk years are typically late adolescence and early adulthood. By the time someone has served 15, 20, or 25 years, they are not the same person who entered prison at 18 or 19. Many have completed educational programs, participated in therapy, taken responsibility for their actions, and worked to transform their lives.

A Second Look statute creates incentives for that growth. It encourages participation in programming, personal accountability, and long-term rehabilitation — all of which improve institutional safety and community outcomes.

Take it from someone who lived through some of the worst trauma that incarceration can dish out to a young person — and who is fighting everyday to overcome that and use my experience to advance better justice policy. A bill like SB 26-115 strengthens faith in our justice system. A system that can revisit extreme sentences imposed on very young people — with careful review and strict standards — is a system that balances accountability with fairness. It reflects both fiscal responsibility and evidence-based policymaking.

SB26-115 does not erase harm. It does not remove consequences. It simply allows for review — and for the possibility that people who committed serious crimes as emerging adults can demonstrate that they have changed.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to vote yes on SB26-115.

Senate Judiciary

02/25/2026 01:30 PM

SB26-115 Post-Conviction Relief for Certain Offenders

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Sharletta Evans For themselves	<p>Greeting Chair and Counsel- My name is Sharletta Evans, I am the Executive Director and Founder of Colorado Crime Survivor Network, Inc. I have accomplished great work for teens that have been sentenced with Life without the possibility of parole. The path of advocacy took me to the doorstep of the United States Supreme Court where I submitted my amicus brief for testimony on the behalf of teens practically children with excessive sentencing.</p> <p>However today, I come to you today as a victim family member and a mother. A victim family member because my advocacy work was born out of my tragic loss. It was Dec 21st 1995 when a kid committed such an accident of shooting a gun and took the life of my 3-yr-old son Casson Evans. Yes I said a kid, a 15 yr-old by the name of Raymond Johnson. I decided to take a chance and go against the grain on this kid, I decided to take a second look at this kid, I decided to forgive this kid and go as far as the US Supreme Court so that one day he could experience like from beyond the bars of prison. That second look gave Raymond Johnson another chance at life. I advocated for Raymond Johnson and he sets right before each of you today a free man and not only a free man, but my son. I am in support of this bill because when I took a chance, when I took a second look, I found a kid that is now a man that has not disappointed me. He has been home for 4 years and I am proud to say he is my son and I am his mother.</p> <p>Thank you</p>



February 25, 2026

Good afternoon, Chair Gonzalez and Vice Chair Weissman. My name is Marta Nelson. I am director of sentencing reform at the Vera Institute of Justice, a national criminal justice reform organization helping create safe, thriving communities for over 60 years. **I testify in support of SB26-115, with amendments to increase the upper age limit from 21 to 25 for petitions based on youth at the time of the offense, and to reduce the time served period from 20 to 15 years for petitions from people over the age of 60.**

I applaud your introduction of this broadly applicable second look bill for Colorado. Creating a resentencing opportunity for people who have served a significant period of incarceration upholds accountability for serious harm while recognizing that people can change and may be safely returned to their communities.

SB26-115 aligns with recent reforms adopted in other states. In 2025, Maryland adopted similar second look legislation allowing people who committed crimes as young adults to petition for resentencing after 20 years.¹ However, unlike Colorado's proposal bill, the Maryland law extends eligibility to those who were up to age 25 when they first committed the crime, recognizing—as SB26-115 does in its preamble—that adolescents are not fully matured into adulthood until their mid-twenties. I recommend adopting a similar extension for this bill.² Delaware also passed a similar bill last year that offers, among other things, people 60 years old and older to petition for resentencing based on rehabilitation after serving 15 years.³ I recommend consideration of a similar time period for SB 25-115, as opposed to the 20 years in the current draft.

National Landscape for Second Look Laws

As of today, 16 states have passed legislation—beyond juvenile life without parole (LWOP) resentencing—that allows judges to reconsider a range of sentences based on rehabilitation and current public safety considerations.⁴ Delaware's law is the most comprehensive to date, allowing any incarcerated person—regardless of offense or age—to petition for release on the basis of rehabilitation.⁵

Safety Considerations

As more people return home under second look laws, juvenile LWOP resentencing, and other discretionary release mechanisms, research shows strong public safety outcomes. People released through these discretionary mechanisms—including those convicted of violent offenses—demonstrate substantially lower recidivism rates than the broader

population of people released after completing their full sentences. This pattern is evident in states that have implemented these sentencing reforms:

- **California:** People resentenced after a retroactive change to felony murder laws or individualized recommendations from corrections department officials—97 percent of whom had been convicted of violent offenses and who served a median of 12–14 years—had a one-year reconviction rate of just 3 to 4 percent (three year rates not yet available), compared to 21 percent for the overall population.⁶
- **Washington, DC:** In 2019, the District of Columbia expanded its existing juvenile resentencing law to include people who were convicted of crimes committed before age 25 and had served at least 15 years. Resentencing decisions are based on maturity, fitness to reenter society, and public safety. As of March 2025, DC has released 368 people, with a 3 percent reconviction rate for any new offense.⁷

These strong safety results can be attributed to two key factors. First, criminal activity decreases with age, particularly for violent crime.⁸ Second, research shows that participation in high-quality programming reduces recidivism after release, and engagement in such programming factors into successful resentencing outcomes.⁹

Survivor Considerations

Opponents of Second Look policies often argue that reopening long sentences harms survivors' sense of closure. However, crime survivors are not a monolith; many support updated sentencing laws and guidelines that build public safety through healing and change rather than punishment alone.¹⁰ Second Look policies reflects that by incentivizing rehabilitation and reducing the risk of future harm.

SB 26-115 provides crime victims the opportunity to be heard in a second look resentencing consideration. Judges will be able to hear from affected individuals or family members and incorporate their perspectives.

To support safety, justice, and accountability in Colorado, I urge you to adopt the proposed amendments for SB 26-115 and pass this bill.

Regards,

Marta Nelson, Director of Sentencing Reform, Vera Institute of Justice
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¹ Maryland HB 085 (2025). <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Legislation/Details/HB0853?ys=2025RS>

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- ² Ashley Nellis and Nikkie Monazzam, *Left to Die in Prison, Emerging Adults 25 and Younger Sentenced to Life Without Parole* (Washington, D.C.: The Sentencing Project, 2023) 8, <https://www.sentencingproject.org/reports/left-to-die-in-prison-emerging-adults-25-and-younger-sentenced-to-life-without-parole/>
- ³ Delaware SB 10 (2025), <https://legis.delaware.gov/BillDetail/142014>.
- ⁴ Sara Cohbra and Becky Feldman, *The Second Look Movement: An Assessment of the Nation's Sentence Review Laws* (Washington, DC: The Sentencing Project, 2025), 4, <https://www.sentencingproject.org/reports/the-second-look-movement-a-review-of-the-nations-sentence-review-laws>. The states are: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Utah, and Washington. After this was published, New Jersey also passed S4870 in January 2026, establishing a right to petition for resentencing consideration based on a connection between the conviction and a history of victimization.
- ⁵ Delaware SS 1 (2025), <https://legis.delaware.gov/BillDetail/142344>; SS 1 states that individuals aged 60 and above must have served at least 15 years before making an application, people younger than that must have served at least 25 years. Maryland's bill allows anyone not convicted of life without parole, and who were under the age of 25 when they committed the offense, to apply for resentencing after they have served 20 years.
- ⁶ Alissa Skog and Johanna Lacoce, *The Role of Second Look Policies in Reforming California's Approach to Incarceration* (Berkeley, CA: California Policy Lab, 2025), <https://perma.cc/4FYA-EQZ5>.
- ⁷ Center for Court Excellence (CCE), *D.C.'s Incarceration Reduction Amendment Act and Second Look Amendment Act* (Washington, DC: CCE, 2025), <https://perma.cc/KNR9-CLO9>.
- ⁸ Howard N. Snyder, *Arrest in the United States, 1990–2010* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2012), Figures 3, fig. 4 (murder), fig. 77 (forcible rape), fig. 5, fig. 11; fig. 8, fig. (robbery) & fig. 24 (burglary), <https://perma.cc/SA4A-4WGS>.
- ⁹ Grant Duwe, *The Use and Impact of Correctional Programming for Inmates on Pre- and Post-Release Outcomes* (Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, 2017), 21–24, <https://perma.cc/55LV-DYAD>.
- ¹⁰ Erica Bryant, "Listen to their Stories: These Crime Survivors Don't Want More Prison," Vera Institute of Justice, October 29, 2025, <https://www.vera.org/news/listen-to-their-stories>; and Alliance for Safety and Justice (ASJ) and Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice (CSSJ), *Crime Survivors Speak 2024: A National Survey of Victims' Views on Safety and Justice* (California: ASJ and CSSJ, 2024), 4, <https://perma.cc/8PLY-948B>.