

Mario Monteiro

I am writing in support of H-5650, a critical piece of legislation that would prohibit the incarceration of 12-year-olds. As a society, we must recognize that children are still in the process of developing both mentally and emotionally, and subjecting them to the harsh conditions of detention can cause irreparable harm. Incarcerating such young individuals does not address the root causes of their behavior, which often stem from trauma, neglect, or other underlying issues. Instead of focusing on punitive measures, we should prioritize alternatives that focus on rehabilitation, healing, and personal growth. H-5650 offers an opportunity to rethink how we approach young offenders and offer them the support they need to change their trajectories for the better.

Instead of incarceration, we can provide these children with access to trauma-informed programs, counseling services, and restorative justice initiatives. Trauma-informed classes can help children address the underlying emotional pain and experiences that often lead to their involvement in the justice system. Through counseling, children can learn how to manage their emotions, make better decisions, and understand the consequences of their actions. Restorative justice reforms can create opportunities for young individuals to take accountability for their actions in a more constructive and community-oriented way, allowing them to rebuild relationships and repair the harm they may have caused.

By supporting H-5650, we are acknowledging the need for a more compassionate and effective approach to juvenile justice. Instead of focusing on punishment, we can provide children with the tools they need to grow into responsible, healthy adults. It is critical that we invest in rehabilitation over incarceration, ensuring that our justice system supports young people in transforming their lives rather than punishing them at an age when they are still capable of change. I urge lawmakers to support this bill and invest in a future where children are given the opportunity to heal and thrive.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Mario Monteiro

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