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Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison
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March 16, 2023

Senator Ron Latz
Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 3105
95 University Avenue W.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Representative Sandra Feist
409 State Office Building
100 Rev Dr. Martin Luther King Jr Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Support for Senate File 1325 and House File 1300 - Revising Juvenile Life Without Parole Statutes

Dear Senator Latz and Representative Feist:

Thank you for your long-standing commitment for justice. I urge you to support HF 1300 and SF 1325, legislation aiming to eliminate sentencing juveniles to life without parole. This legislation balances holding juveniles who commit serious crimes accountable and appropriately considers brain development at the time the crime occurred. Thirty-three states already recognize the limits of adolescent brain development.

In 2012, the United States Supreme Court held in *Miller v. Alabama* that children are neurologically different than adults and cannot be subject to a mandatory life sentence without the possibility of release. Minnesota is one of only a handful of states that still has not updated our statutes to be in line with the *Miller* ruling. It is rare for Minnesota to be far behind the other states and the time is now to join the clear majority of states following the Supreme Court's ruling. Other states that have already eliminated juvenile without parole statutes like California, Illinois, and Massachusetts have not seen negative public safety impacts.

Let me be clear: this bill does not allow for juveniles that have committed serious crimes to go unpunished or be held unaccountable. Rather, this bill addresses Minnesota's outdated and unconstitutional statute by allowing judges to have more flexibility in sentencing, provide

juveniles with an opportunity for rehabilitation, and create pathways for juveniles to be reintegrated into our society.

This bill ensures that victims voices are a critical and necessary part of the review process. After 15 years, a juvenile offender will have their sentence reviewed for the *possibility* of parole—not the guarantee of parole. Part of the review process' important safeguards include the release board making reasonable efforts to notify the victims of the release review hearing and the board must consider the victim's input when making a decision. This is the right thing to do.

In conclusion, I support HF 1300 and SF 1325 because it is time to address Minnesota's outdated and unconstitutional statute and this bill still holds juvenile offenders accountable while giving victims a voice in the review process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Keith Ellison". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Keith Ellison
Minnesota Attorney General