

## GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON AT RISK YOUTH

May 15, 2015

Committee:

Thank you for hearing me. I am Barbara Carpenter a seven year member of the Juvenile Parole Board.

In 2013 SB129 was passed which mandated that all children placed in the Youth Service Center must be paroled in six months unless there was clear and convincing evidence that continued commitment is necessary in order to protect the safety of the minor or of the community. Sadly there are many self-destructive and relationship destroying behaviors that don't rise to the degree of their safety or the safety of the community.

Prior to that bill youth were paroled when the treatment team deemed that the child was ready to go back into their community, having successfully treated the behavior that caused them to be committed. They were given 4 hour furloughs, then week-ends, and finally a one month administrative leave to test their ability to cope with their environment. Now with only six months to work with before the mandated parole, they were almost never given enough leave, if any, to test their new life skills. Most of them were not even well into their treatment. 100% of them had their paroles revoked for unacceptable violations of their parole agreements.

Sb129 actually denied them the treatment they needed and had a right to receive. By law, a lawyer is available to any child up for revocation. These youth all suffered setbacks in their treatment causing them to usually need a longer inpatient stay than if they had continued treatment. Both are unjustified expenses.

In 2014 SB 1624 was passed in an attempt to moderate the previous bill. It stated that the youth still had to be paroled in 6 months unless treatment was needed in order to protect the safety of the child or of the community, and in such case declined the release of the child. The child then has the right to review the decision and the law offers council for the child.

So the children still must come before the Parole Board. They are all very positive that they will be paroled, and when they are not they are very disappointed and upset, harmful to their treatment. We try to tell them that the law demands the parole hearing whether or not they have finished their treatment.

100% of these youth have been revoked also. They are not ready to go out into their homes and communities. They do not yet have the skills to survive the stresses of their often dangerous homes and communities. Don't you think that this failure is very hard on these already very vulnerable teens?

In my opinion the Sununu Youth Center has created a very successful program for treating these very distressed and vulnerable youth. This program has been severely damaged by these two laws. If not treated most of them would not be well enough educated or stable enough to perform well in the community personally or job wise. These youth will often end up in jail.

Please help us get rid of the mandated six month parole. It is a negative and destructive idea passed by legislators who have little knowledge of treatment needed for youth with serious problems.

Barbara Carpenter