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April 16, 2007

Senator Gloria Romero
Senate Majority Leader
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 313
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 999: Elimination of Life Without Parole (LWOP) Sentences
for Child Offenders

Dear Senator Romero:

I would like to lend my support to SB 999; the proposed legislation to eliminate the use of life without parole sentences to punish children for crimes committed under the age of 18. I have been involved in and concerned about the treatment of youthful offenders since I began my career as a prosecutor in 1989. As part of the Riverside County District Attorneys Office, I led the implementation of one of California's first juvenile early-intervention programs - Riverside County's YOUTH ACCOUNTABILITY TEAM. I continued my involvement in youth intervention during my television career with COURT TV by becoming an integral part of the network's public service initiative, CHOICES AND CONSEQUENCES. I also hosted the award winning television special "*Straight Talk About Marijuana*", through the auspices of Court TV and the U.S. Office of National Drug Control Policy.

More importantly, I unsuccessfully intervened in the life of Sara Kruzan long before her commission of the murder that led to her LWOP sentence - this bill hits so close to home for me. This experience combined with over 10 years as a deputy district attorney and legal journalist confirms my belief that the practice of incarcerating kids for life ignores how kids develop, at the very least. At its worst, it is a cruel, inhumane and racially biased practice. I strongly support SB 999 as an effective approach to treat youth who get into the most serious trouble with the law in a way that not only considers the circumstances of each young offender individually but preserves, protects and advances the interests of our society.

Sincerely,

James Curtis,
Attorney at Law
cc : Senator Leland Yee

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