

# **It's time for California to end the use of life without parole sentences for youth!**

**Be a part of passing this bill!**

**Here are three sets of six different support letters for SB 394.**

**Three people need to hear from you! Please pick three letters:**

- 1. One for your Senator**
- 2. One for your Assembly Member, and**
- 3. One for Governor Brown.**

## **You can print them and**

- ⇒ Choose the one you like best and sign it;
- ⇒ Give them to friends and family members to sign;
- ⇒ Print bunch of sets and bring them to your church or other group to get people to sign in support.

**Suggestion: Don't leave it to others to send their letters in. Collect them and send them in yourself!**

## **Two options for sending by fax or email**

1. Human Rights Watch will send the letter for you: Send us your letter, and we'll get it to your Senator, Assembly Member, and Governor Brown. You can send it to Human Rights Watch via fax (310-477-4622) or by email (send to [rostamm@hrw.org](mailto:rostamm@hrw.org) with the subject line: "SB 394 support letters.")

**OR**

2. You can fax the letter to your Senator yourself: You can find out who your Senator is by using this website: <http://findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov/> Click on the link with your Senator's name and you will be redirected to their website where you can find their fax number.

**1. PICK ONE OF THE FOLLOWING LETTERS FOR**

**YOUR SENATOR**

The Honorable  
California State Senator  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Via facsimile

**SUPPORT FOR SENATE BILL 394**

Dear Senator:

I support Senate Bill 394 (SB 394) and thank you for your support of this important bill. Senate Bill 394 would bring California law into compliance with the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Montgomery v. Louisiana* (2016), which confirms that life without parole sentences are unconstitutional in almost every case where a person was under 18 years old at the time of their crime.

Our laws should recognize what *Montgomery* recognizes: that young people are different from adults and particularly capable of growth, change, and rehabilitation. We now know from neuroscience research that the adolescent brain is not fully formed until well into early adulthood. This means that youth do not have adult levels of judgment, impulse control, or ability to foresee the consequences of their actions, and they almost always grow out of reckless behavior that leads to crime. Because of this, it is wrong to sentence young people who are still developing to the most extreme adult sentences.

California law should comply with constitutional law, and reflect widely accepted conclusions of science.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email

cc: Human Rights Watch (fax: 310-477-4622)

The Honorable  
California State Senator  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

*Via facsimile*

**Senate Bill 394: Please support this bill**

Dear Senator,

I support Senate Bill 394. In California, youth under the age of 18 years old are sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. They are sentenced to die in prison. This is a sentence that should never be imposed on teenagers.

The United States is the only country in the world to use the life without parole sentence on juveniles. Young people are different from adults, and our laws should treat them differently, even if the underlying crime is very serious. The U.S. Supreme Court recognizes that life without parole is an unconstitutional sentence in almost every case in which the person was a youth at the time of the crime. Many states have changed their laws in the last few years to eliminate life without parole as a possible sentence for young people.

California should be leading the way on smart criminal justice, not lagging behind. Please support of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
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Email

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VIA FAX

The Honorable  
California State Senator  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Support for SB 394**

Dear Senator:

I am a concerned citizen of California. I am writing to tell you that I support SB 394, and ask you to support it too.

In 2012, the U.S. Supreme Court held that youth are different from adults, and that these differences must be considered in determining whether to sentence a young person to life without parole. Life without parole is unconstitutional in almost every case in which the person was under 18 at the time of the crime. The Supreme Court stated can comply with the constitutional rule by giving those youth sentenced to life without parole a parole hearing instead of expensive, litigation-intensive re-sentencing hearings.

The option is the basis for SB 394 and it makes sense. Resentencing hearings are incredibly resource-intensive, often requiring more than a day of court time, hundreds of hours of legal work, and thousands of tax-payer dollars for a single person's hearing. It makes far more sense, and would be far simpler, to rely on the existing parole process – it would help California save money and avoid potentially endless litigation over the constitutionality of California law, while also guaranteeing that public safety is well preserved. SB 394 would ensure that California is not wasting money incarcerating individuals who have fully rehabilitated, while also making our laws more just.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

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Signed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email

cc: Human Rights Watch Fax: 310.477.4622

The Honorable  
California State Senator  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

*Via facsimile*

**RE: Please vote YES on SB 394**

Dear Senator:

I support passage of SB 394, and I urge you to vote “yes” on it. I believe that what we know now about teenagers is different from what we knew when the laws about youth life without parole were originally enacted. We know now that teens and young adults are still maturing. This is confirmed by common sense and by the experience of anyone who has spent time with young people. What this means is that teenagers are uniquely equipped to change and rehabilitate. They don’t have to be (and they should not be) defined by one incident from their youth. It’s just wrong to take sixteen- or seventeen-year-olds, lock them up, and throw away the key.

Obviously, even young people have to be held accountable when they commit crimes. SB 394 does this. But, importantly, it also ensures that those who have chosen a good path and are becoming rehabilitated will get a chance to go before the parole board and prove they have changed. Some may never get out, but those who shouldn’t be incarcerated forever will get a chance to show they have grown, matured, and changed. SB 394 is the right thing to do and will be good for California.

I thank you for your support of this bill.

Sincerely,

cc: Human Rights Watch (via fax, 310-477-4622)

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Signed

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Printed Name

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Address

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Email

The Honorable  
California State Senator  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

*Via facsimile*

**RE: Senate Bill 394 Support**

Dear Senator:

I support SB 394. Our laws should recognize that young people are especially capable of rehabilitation. SB 394 would give the 16- and 17-year-olds who have been sentenced to life without parole a choice: work towards rehabilitation, or you will spend the rest of your life in prison. Most kids grow out of the type of behavior that leads to crime. California should change its law to comply with the U.S. Supreme Court's recent decision, and join the numerous other states that have recognized that it is wrong to sentence young people to die in prison.

SB 394 will be good for California and good for public safety. It will give individuals who are currently serving youth life without parole the opportunity to work toward release, access to valuable self-help programs and vocational training, and live with hope that someday they might be able to earn their freedom. Also, SB 394 will not endanger public safety at all because it does not guarantee that anyone will be released from prison – it only allows certain individuals to enter the parole process where they will have the chance to show change.

California law should promote rehabilitation – not punishment at the expense of all other important considerations and concerns. Please support SB 394.

Very truly yours,

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Signed

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Printed Name

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Address

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Email

cc: Human Rights Watch, Fax: (310) 477-4622

The Honorable  
California State Senator  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

*Via facsimile*

**RE: The *Montgomery* Bill – SB 394**

Dear Senator:

I am writing in support of SB 394. This bill would give young people a second chance. I think our laws should reflect scientific findings, recognize that young people are especially capable of redemption, and require those who commit serious crimes at a young age to work towards rehabilitation. We know that the adolescent brain is not fully formed until well into early adulthood, and that young people do not have adult levels of judgment, impulse control, or ability to assess risks. SB 394 would make California law consistent with these basic scientific truths.

SB 394 would help California law promote rehabilitation and benefit everyone in California (not just those immediately impacted by the law). The bill holds youth offenders accountable for their actions. But it also gives them hope, which will motivate them to turn their lives around. For our criminal laws to truly serve Californians, those laws should promote the opportunity for those who commit crimes to change and become people who will contribute to society instead of harming it. SB 394 will promote this change. It will also enable California to stop wastefully spending tens of thousands of dollars a year on incarcerating people who have rehabilitated, and instead allow those people to be reunited with our communities and become productive, tax-paying citizens.

People who are very young at the time of their crime should have a chance to go home after serving many years in prison if they can prove they have changed. This bill would require these youth to prove that they have chosen a different path in life and are worthy of a second chance.

Please support SB 394.

Sincerely yours,

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Signed

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Address

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Printed Name

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Email

Cc: Human Rights Watch (fax: 310-477-4622)



**2. PICK ONE OF THE FOLLOWING LETTERS FOR  
YOUR ASSEMBLY MEMBER**

The Honorable  
California State Assembly Member  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Via facsimile

**SUPPORT FOR SENATE BILL 394**

Dear Assembly Member:

I support Senate Bill 394 (SB 394) and thank you for your support of this important bill. Senate Bill 394 would bring California law into compliance with the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Montgomery v. Louisiana* (2016), which confirms that life without parole sentences are unconstitutional in almost every case where a person was under 18 years old at the time of their crime.

Our laws should recognize what *Montgomery* recognizes: that young people are different from adults and particularly capable of growth, change, and rehabilitation. We now know from neuroscience research that the adolescent brain is not fully formed until well into early adulthood. This means that youth do not have adult levels of judgment, impulse control, or ability to foresee the consequences of their actions, and they almost always grow out of reckless behavior that leads to crime. Because of this, it is wrong to sentence young people who are still developing to the most extreme adult sentences.

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Sincerely,

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Signed

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Printed Name

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cc: Human Rights Watch (fax: 310-477-4622)

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State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

*Via facsimile*

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The United States is the only country in the world to use the life without parole sentence on juveniles. Young people are different from adults, and our laws should treat them differently, even if the underlying crime is very serious. The U.S. Supreme Court recognizes that life without parole is an unconstitutional sentence in almost every case in which the person was a youth at the time of the crime. Many states have changed their laws in the last few years to eliminate life without parole as a possible sentence for young people.

California should be leading the way on smart criminal justice, not lagging behind. Please support of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

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Printed Name

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cc: Human Rights Watch (fax: 310-477-4622)

VIA FAX

The Honorable  
California State Assembly Member  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Support for SB 394**

Dear Assembly Member:

I am a concerned citizen of California. I am writing to tell you that I support SB 394, and ask you to support it too.

In 2012, the U.S. Supreme Court held that youth are different from adults, and that these differences must be considered in determining whether to sentence a young person to life without parole. Life without parole is unconstitutional in almost every case in which the person was under 18 at the time of the crime. The Supreme Court stated can comply with the constitutional rule by giving those youth sentenced to life without parole a parole hearing instead of expensive, litigation-intensive re-sentencing hearings.

The option is the basis for SB 394 and it makes sense. Resentencing hearings are incredibly resource-intensive, often requiring more than a day of court time, hundreds of hours of legal work, and thousands of tax-payer dollars for a single person's hearing. It makes far more sense, and would be far simpler, to rely on the existing parole process – it would help California save money and avoid potentially endless litigation over the constitutionality of California law, while also guaranteeing that public safety is well preserved. SB 394 would ensure that California is not wasting money incarcerating individuals who have fully rehabilitated, while also making our laws more just.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

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Signed

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Printed Name

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Address

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Email

cc: Human Rights Watch Fax: 310.477.4622

The Honorable  
California State Assembly Member  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

*Via facsimile*

**RE: Please vote YES on SB 394**

Dear Assembly Member:

I support passage of SB 394, and I urge you to vote “yes” on it. I believe that what we know now about teenagers is different from what we knew when the laws about youth life without parole were originally enacted. We know now that teens and young adults are still maturing. This is confirmed by common sense and by the experience of anyone who has spent time with young people. What this means is that teenagers are uniquely equipped to change and rehabilitate. They don’t have to be (and they should not be) defined by one incident from their youth. It’s just wrong to take sixteen- or seventeen-year-olds, lock them up, and throw away the key.

Obviously, even young people have to be held accountable when they commit crimes. SB 394 does this. But, importantly, it also ensures that those who have chosen a good path and are becoming rehabilitated will get a chance to go before the parole board and prove they have changed. Some may never get out, but those who shouldn’t be incarcerated forever will get a chance to show they have grown, matured, and changed. SB 394 is the right thing to do and will be good for California.

I thank you for your support of this bill.

Sincerely,

cc: Human Rights Watch (via fax, 310-477-4622)

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Printed Name

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California State Assembly Member  
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**RE: Senate Bill 394 Support**

Dear Assembly Member:

I support SB 394. Our laws should recognize that young people are especially capable of rehabilitation. SB 394 would give the 16- and 17-year-olds who have been sentenced to life without parole a choice: work towards rehabilitation, or you will spend the rest of your life in prison. Most kids grow out of the type of behavior that leads to crime. California should change its law to comply with the U.S. Supreme Court's recent decision, and join the numerous other states that have recognized that it is wrong to sentence young people to die in prison.

SB 394 will be good for California and good for public safety. It will give individuals who are currently serving youth life without parole the opportunity to work toward release, access to valuable self-help programs and vocational training, and live with hope that someday they might be able to earn their freedom. Also, SB 394 will not endanger public safety at all because it does not guarantee that anyone will be released from prison – it only allows certain individuals to enter the parole process where they will have the chance to show change.

California law should promote rehabilitation – not punishment at the expense of all other important considerations and concerns. Please support SB 394.

Very truly yours,

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Signed

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cc: Human Rights Watch, Fax: (310) 477-4622

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*Via facsimile*

**RE: The *Montgomery* Bill – SB 394**

Dear Assembly Member:

I am writing in support of SB 394. This bill would give young people a second chance. I think our laws should reflect scientific findings, recognize that young people are especially capable of redemption, and require those who commit serious crimes at a young age to work towards rehabilitation. We know that the adolescent brain is not fully formed until well into early adulthood, and that young people do not have adult levels of judgment, impulse control, or ability to assess risks. SB 394 would make California law consistent with these basic scientific truths.

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People who are very young at the time of their crime should have a chance to go home after serving many years in prison if they can prove they have changed. This bill would require these youth to prove that they have chosen a different path in life and are worthy of a second chance.

Please support SB 394.

Sincerely yours,

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Signed

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Address

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Printed Name

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Email

Cc: Human Rights Watch (fax: 310-477-4622)

**3. PICK ONE OF THE FOLLOWING LETTERS FOR**

**THE GOVERNOR**



The Honorable Jerry Brown  
Governor of California  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Via email

**SUPPORT FOR SENATE BILL 394**

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Sincerely,

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Signed

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Printed Name

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Email

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The Honorable Jerry Brown  
Governor of California  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

*Via email*

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Sincerely,

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VIA EMAIL

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Sincerely,

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Printed Name

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Address

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Email

cc: Human Rights Watch Fax: 310.477.4622

The Honorable Jerry Brown  
Governor of California  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

*Via email*

**RE: Please vote YES on SB 394**

Dear Governor Brown:

I support passage of SB 394, and I urge you to sign this important bill into law. I believe that what we know now about teenagers is different from what we knew when the laws about youth life without parole were originally enacted. We know now that teens and young adults are still maturing. This is confirmed by common sense and by the experience of anyone who has spent time with young people. What this means is that teenagers are uniquely equipped to change and rehabilitate. They don't have to be (and they should not be) defined by one incident from their youth. It's just wrong to take sixteen- or seventeen-year-olds, lock them up, and throw away the key.

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Printed Name

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Sincerely yours,

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