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**COUNTY OF MENDOCINO
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

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March 13, 2012

The Honorable Wesley Chesbro
State Capitol
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0001

RE: Letter of support for Senate Bill 9 (SB 9), The Fair Sentencing for Youth Act

Dear Assemblymember Chesbro:

The Mendocino County Board of Supervisors strongly endorses Senate Bill 9, The Fair Sentencing for Youth Act and urges your support when the bill comes to a vote in the Assembly. SB 9 offers hope of rehabilitation and eventual release to juvenile offenders who were under age 18 at the time of their offense and who were sentenced to life without the possibility of parole.

Imposition of the sentence of life without parole ignores the fact that many youthful offenders are immature and often acting under the influence of older accomplices. Science has verified that the adolescent brain is still developing the ability to comprehend consequences and control impulses.

Statistics that indicate that nationally a majority of juveniles sentenced to life without the possibility of parole are first offenders indicates that this sentence is not reserved only for the worst of the worst. Additionally, there are serious indications of racial disparity in sentencing for juvenile offenders sentenced to life without the possibility of parole.

SB 9 recognizes the possibility that juvenile offenders, even those who have committed heinous crimes, may gain insight into gravity of their crimes and develop the capacity to change.

SB 9 will not result in new sentencing hearings for every adolescent sentenced to life without the possibility of parole, nor will it result in a guarantee of a lesser sentence to those who do qualify for a hearing. Even if they are resentenced, they must still serve a minimum of 25 years in prison and convince a parole board that they merit release.

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In conclusion, we strongly urge your support for SB 9.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter.

Sincerely,

John McCowen, Chair
Mendocino County Board of Supervisors

Copy: Senator Yee