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**OPD Applauds Supreme Court Decision, Furthers Effort to Address Juvenile Life and Life Without Parole Sentences in Maryland**

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The Maryland Office of the Public Defender (OPD) applauds the Supreme Court decision in Montgomery v. Louisiana, which makes retroactive an earlier decision banning mandatory life without parole for children. The prior case, Miller v. Alabama, held that sentencing a child to life without parole without a hearing violated the Eighth Amendment of the federal Constitution.

In Montgomery, the Supreme Court recognized that life without any hope of parole is a ‘death in prison’ sentence that should be all but eliminated for children, regardless of when that child was sentenced.

OPD estimates that there are more than 200 people serving a life sentence for crimes committed before they were 18 years old. Although Maryland does not have a mandatory life without parole sentencing scheme, the vast majority of Maryland inmates who were sentenced to life and life without parole as children are subject to an equally excessive sentence without the consideration required under Montgomery and the earlier cases.

“Every child defendant deserves a full and fair sentencing hearing where a judge considers the child’s age, role in the offense, and the mitigating circumstances of youth” said James Johnston, Director of OPD’s Youth Re-Sentencing Project. “We are actively reviewing cases and leveraging resources to represent all OPD clients serving a juvenile life sentence.”

Prisoners and family members of inmates serving a juvenile life sentence are encouraged to contact James Johnston, Youth Re-Sentencing Project, 217 East Redwood Street, Suite 1020, Baltimore, Maryland 21202, via phone at 410-209-8615 or via email at [jjohnston@opd.state.md.us](mailto:jjohnston@opd.state.md.us). We also welcome calls from attorneys interested in providing pro bono representation or support.