



GOV & POLITICS

POLICE & PRISON

## COMMENTARY

# Statement from the sponsors of SB 43, a bill to ban life without parole for children


SEN. ANTOINETTE SEDILLO LOPEZ

REP. GAIL CHASEY

REP. DAYAN HOCHMAN-VIGIL

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 A prison guard escorts Santana Serrano back to her cell on Nov. 12 at Western New Mexico Correctional Facility in Grants. Without a change to state law, she'll be nearly 50 when she is eligible for parole. Full series at the link below. (Photo by Austin Fisher / Source NM)

It is with heavy hearts that the sponsors and advocates for SB 43

(the second-chance bill) announce that we will be removing the bill from consideration in the New Mexico House of Representatives. This is a decision we do not take lightly but is one we are forced to make to preserve the values on which this important legislation is based. The bill will be reintroduced in the 2023 legislative session, and we are confident it will pass.

## YOUNG AND INCARCERATED: Life sentences for people who aren't yet 18



It's a moment in Santana Serrano's life — just a few seconds really — when she was a teenager that changed everything. Source NM's Austin Fisher brings us this series. Fisher reported that the basics of her case were not in question: Two younger guys got in a fight down in Hobbs, N.M. Serrano was ... Continue

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We are grateful to the diverse community who has gathered in support of the bill. The list of our supporters has become too long to enumerate. We have been joined by members of the judiciary, faith communities and faith leaders, the pediatric medical community, and a diversity of community and professional organizations. To all of you, we thank you for your commitment to the ideal that all children deserve hope.

Belief in redemption and second chances is something that almost everyone claims. But, unfortunately, we have seen this session that not everyone has had the courage to fight for those beliefs.

In the final week of the session, it has been frustrating to watch as a chorus of voices was drowned out by a handful of district attorneys and other parties who have misrepresented this issue to victims of tragedy across our state. While we have negotiated in good faith,

these parties have continued to move the goalposts, attempting to amend this bill beyond recognition. We know from the countless success stories in other states that all children – even those who have committed serious acts of violence – are capable of redemption. This truth cannot and will not be compromised, so we must summon the moral courage to cease negotiations and continue this campaign next year.

## New Mexico governor orchestrating compromises on second-chance bill



New Mexico's Democratic governor is arranging talks with the attorney general, "public safety leaders" and victims advocates to erode the second-chance bill. The legislation is meant to decrease how long someone is in prison before they're eligible for parole if they are convicted as a juvenile. It

stands at 30 years. The original 2022 measure ... Continue reading



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We know from the countless success stories in other states that all children – even those who have committed serious acts of violence – are capable of redemption. This truth cannot and will not be compromised, so we must summon the moral courage to cease negotiations and continue this campaign next year.

When children cause harm in our community, it is important to hold them accountable in age-appropriate ways that leave room for the profound potential they have to experience dramatic positive transformation. We know that victims of youth-involved violence in this state have lost something that simply cannot be restored by legislative process.

We also know that we do not honor crime victims or their families

by failing to acknowledge that children are different and that they can be rehabilitated. We can do both, but it will take honesty and courage. We regret that honesty and courage were lacking by some this session.

Along with all other voices, we were especially grateful to have been joined by supportive survivors of youth violence who have testified in support of this bill at every hearing. In an open letter to lawmakers, they wrote:

“Although our lives have been forever altered by the violent actions of people who were under 18 at the time, we are firm in our conviction that children never cease to be deserving of compassion and concern. They represent both the most vulnerable members of our community and our most valuable resource as we work for a more just future.”

To these families, we thank you for your bravery and for your vulnerability.

We lament that New Mexico has missed the opportunity to become the twenty-sixth state to abolish juvenile life without parole. When states like Oregon and West Virginia agree, we know we are not discussing a political issue, but a moral one.

The political frustrations of this session only embolden our commitment to fighting for reasonable reform. We will continue to fight for New Mexico to join the diverse chorus of states that have acknowledged that children are more than the worst thing they have done.

– *Sen. Antoinette Sedillo Lopez*

– *Rep. Gail Chasey*

– *Rep. Dayan Hochman Vigil*



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## SEN. ANTOINETTE SEDILLO LOPEZ

Antoinette is a state senator for N.M. Senate District 16. Previously, she was a law professor at UNM School of Law for 25 years, which included eight years as associate dean. Sedillo Lopez later became the Executive Director of Enlace Comunitario, a non-profit working with victims of domestic violence in the Latino-immigrant community of Central New Mexico.

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## REP. GAIL CHASEY

N.M. Rep. Chasey was first elected in 1996. A Democrat representing a diverse and progressive Albuquerque district that includes UNM, Rep. Chasey has been chair of the House Judiciary and House Consumer and Public Affairs Committees. She has also co-chaired two interim committees: Courts, Corrections & Justice and the Tobacco Settlement Revenue Oversight Committees. In addition to the 2009 repeal of the death penalty, a bill she had championed since 1999, Chasey has successfully sponsored legislation to eliminate filing fees for victims of domestic violence, end discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, and expand community corrections.

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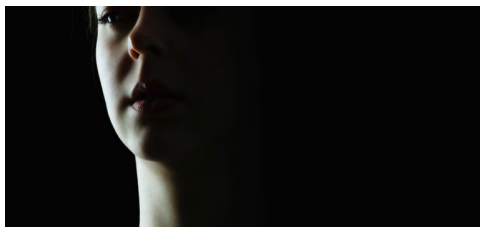


## REP. DAYAN HOCHMAN-VIGIL

Dayan "Day" M. Hochman-Vigil serves District 15, which encompasses Albuquerque's North Valley and NE Heights. She was elected to the position in 2018. She's focused on criminal justice reform and transparency in government. Hochman-Vigil is the only certified aviation and space attorney in New Mexico. She practices law as a commercial aviation safety and security specialist and has been recognized for her work providing pro bono community legal services. Day has fought for legislation to increase transparency in political lobbying and to fund more career-technical programs in New Mexico public schools.

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