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July 4, 2012

Senator Stewart Greenleaf, Chairman
Senate Judiciary Committee
19 East Wing
Senate Box 203012
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3012

Dear Senator Greenleaf,

I believe that is appropriate that I am writing to you on Independence Day! On behalf of Sharon Wiggins, the longest serving female serving the unconstitutional sentence of mandatory juvenile life without the possibility of parole in Pennsylvania and who is someone I profoundly respect and am honored to call my friend, I hope that you and your fellow legislatures act courageously and swiftly and give her the freedom she has earned and deserves.

As you can imagine, the stress of not knowing how the Commonwealth will proceed with the United States Supreme Court's ruling in Miller v. Alabama and Jackson v. Hobbs, is palpable. It is my sincere hope that the Commonwealth has the courage to demonstrate to the world that we do not throw kids away for life in prison! In fact, many young adults who committed their crimes just past the age 18, should be given a second chance as well. I have secured Sharon employment and she has many supporters who will assist her in making the most of her life as a free woman. Sharon has a wealth of knowledge, wisdom and respect that deserves to be shared and which ultimately, I strongly believe will enrich the people of the Commonwealth and beyond.

On the July 12th Senate Judiciary hearing, please realize that the Commonwealth has the perfect opportunity to show the world that Pennsylvania is a state that is merciful, compassionate and ready to be a leader in reforming an outdated, barbaric and inhumane criminal justice system.

Sincerely yours,

ellen melchiondo

cc: Sharon Wiggins