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State Appellate Defender Office statement regarding *People v Parks*

The State Appellate Defender Office applauds the decision of the Michigan Supreme Court today in [*People v Kemo Parks*](#), holding that automatically sentencing an 18-year old to die in prison violates the Michigan constitution as cruel or unusual punishment.

The Court came to “the inescapable conclusion that mandatorily condemning 18-year-olds to die in prison, without consideration of the attributes of youth that 18-year-olds and juveniles share, no longer comports with the ‘evolving standards of decency that mark the progress of a maturing society.’” The Court acknowledged that because of how a young adolescent’s brain is still developing, “automatic condemnation to die in prison at 18 is beyond severity—it is cruelty.”

The court’s decision entitles Mr. Parks to an individualized resentencing hearing in the trial court.

“In rejecting a sentence of death in prison for Mr. Parks, the Michigan Supreme Court recognized what science and parents have long known – that teenagers are different from adults and that their brains are not fully developed. We are excited for the youth we represent and the many other teenagers in the same situation,” Mr. Parks’ attorney, Assistant Defender Angeles Meneses said.

Questions can be directed to Jessica Zimbelman, SADO Managing Attorney at (989) 506-0904.