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SUPERIOR COURT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Criminal Division—Felony Branch

UNITED STATES	**:**	**Case No. 2026 CF3 007856**
v.	**:**	**Sentencing: November 13, 2026**
DARIUS DREW	**:**	**Judge Jennifer A. Di Toro**

MEMORANDUM OPINION

On August 10, 2026, Defendant Darius Drew entered a guilty plea to one count of Aggravated Assault and one count of Carrying a Pistol Without a License. Mr. Drew appeared before the Court for a sentencing hearing on November 13, 2026. At the hearing, the Court sentenced Mr. Drew to an aggregate term of incarceration of 24 months followed by 3 years of supervised release, with the execution of all but the 6 months he already served suspended in favor of 18 months of supervised probation. In addition to the standard conditions of probation, the Court required that Mr. Drew participate in a comprehensive mental health assessment and treatment as deemed necessary by the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency ("CSOSA"), undergo a substance abuse assessment and complete all treatment deemed necessary by CSOSA, and complete 90 hours of community service. He is required to register as a gun offender in the District of Columbia and remain registered for two years following the expiration of his period of probation. The Court entered an order requiring Mr. Drew to stay away from the location of the offense. During the period of probation, Mr. Drew is required to participate in either a GED program or vocational training and to maintain or seek employment. The Court also required Mr. Drew to appear before the Court for regularly-scheduled probation review hearings.

Because Mr. Drew was 19 years old at the time of this offense, he requested through counsel that he be sentenced under the Youth Rehabilitation Act ("YRA"), D.C. Code §§ 24-901 through 24-907. The Court now issues this "written statement on the record of the reasons for its determination" that Mr. Drew is eligible for and will be sentenced under the YRA, D.C. Code §24-903(c)(1). In deciding to sentence Mr. Drew pursuant to the YRA, the Court considered all of the factors set forth in D.C. Code §24-903(c)(2). Specifically, the Court evaluated:

(a) The youth offender's age at the time of the offense: Mr. Drew was born on May 6, 2007. He was 19 years old at the time of the offense and thus falls well within the YRA's definition of a "youth offender." *Id.* § 24-901(6). As our Court of Appeals has noted, age "is a 'one-way rachet' in favor of all youth offenders," *Williams v. United States*, 345 A.3d 570, 582 (D.C. 2025). In consideration of that directive, the Court has weighed Mr. Drew's youth strongly in favor of a YRA sentence.

(b) The nature of the offense: Mr. Drew unquestionably committed a violent, reckless, and dangerous offense that endangered members of the community. This offense resulted in a young bystander being shot in the leg and requiring hospital treatment. Mr. Drew's guilty plea included the admission that he possessed a handgun for which he could not have a license, given his youth. He accepted responsibility for his conduct through a guilty plea prior to trial in the case. At sentencing, he expressed remorse and acknowledged the harm his actions caused to the specific victim and the community generally. The nature of the offense is highly concerning and weighs against sentencing under the YRA.

(c) Prior sentencing under the YRA: Mr. Drew has no prior contact with the criminal justice system, as a juvenile or an adult, and thus has not previously been sentenced under the YRA. This factor weighs in favor of sentencing under the YRA.

(d) Compliance with rules of facility to which the defendant has been committed or with the terms of pretrial release: Mr. Drew was held without bond at the D.C. Jail from May 22, 2026 until he was sentenced on November 13, 2026. The Court received no reports of disciplinary infractions during his incarceration. This factor weighs in favor of sentencing under the YRA, as the Court finds that pretrial incarceration has served to impress upon Mr. Drew the seriousness of his actions in this case. His ability to comply with the rules of the D.C. Jail reflects positively on his ability to comply with the terms of probation and weighs in favor of imposing sentence under the YRA.

(e) Participation in Rehabilitative District Programs: Mr. Drew has not participated in any rehabilitative programs, as he was incarcerated from his presentment on May 22, 2026 to sentencing on November 13, 2026. This factor weighs neutrally with regard to sentencing under the YRA.

(f) Previous contacts with the juvenile and criminal justice systems: This offense marked Mr. Drew's first contact with the criminal justice system at any level; he has no prior arrests, juvenile adjudications, or criminal convictions. This supports the conclusion that this offense is not part of an ongoing pattern of criminal behavior, but represents an aberration, weighing in favor of sentencing under the YRA so that Mr. Drew may repair the damage he caused to the community through a period of probation to include community service, ongoing employment and rehabilitative services.

(g) Family and community circumstances at the time of the offense: The Court considered Mr. Drew's family and social history as set forth in the Presentence Report ("PSR") prepared by CSOSA and the detailed Youth Rehabilitation Act Study prepared by Licensed Social Worker and D.C. Department of Corrections Case Manager Daezja Bray, Clinical Psychologist John J. Lynch, and Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist Gerald L. Weston. All reports recommend that the Court impose a sentence under the YRA.

Mr. Drew himself was shot as a young teenager. He has been exposed to substance abuse, domestic violence, and housing instability throughout his life. Mr. Drew was required to care for himself at a young age, taking on adult responsibilities throughout his childhood. Mr. Drew's father died of cancer several months prior the instant offense, further adding to his familial and personal instability. The Court does not cite these adverse childhood experiences to excuse the conduct for which Mr. Drew is being sentenced. However, as detailed in the YRA, they are factors to which the Court has given weight in fashioning an appropriate sentence.

(h) Ability to appreciate the risks and consequences of his conduct: Mr. Drew was 19 years old at the time of this offense. Both the experts who evaluated him and this Court conclude that his conduct reflected immaturity, poor weighing of risks and benefits, and impetuosity. As our Court of Appeals has directed, "in light of the [YRA] legislative history's focus on the categorical nature of the maturity gap, in the mine run—if not the vast majority—of cases, youth offenders should be presumed to have had a diminished capacity to appreciate risks and consequences." *Williams*, 345 A.3d at 586. The Court discerns no reason that this presumption should not apply to Mr.

Drew. At sentencing, he expressed significant remorse for his conduct and reported that he cannot sleep due to thinking about his actions that day and the effect on the people he harmed and made fearful. Mr. Drew spent nearly six months incarcerated at the D.C. Jail, having never before been so much as arrested for a criminal offense. This factor weighs in favor of sentencing under the YRA, as the seriousness of his actions has been impressed upon him by a period of incarceration and his own reflections on and remorse for his conduct.

(i) Reports of physical, mental, or psychiatric examinations: Cognitive testing placed Mr. Drew in the low range for his age group. His assessment profile reflected the presence of generalized anxiety disorder and an adjustment disorder with depressed mood. The Court finds that Mr. Drew will benefit from the mental health interventions and treatment available through CSOSA and required as part of his probation. This factor weighs in favor of a sentence under the YRA.

(j) Use of controlled substances: Mr. Drew was candid about his struggle with substance abuse, and the fact that he was under the influence of drugs and alcohol at the time he committed this offense. His use of alcohol, marijuana, benzodiazepines, and opioids indicate a habit of self-medicating to cope with the death of his father and other adverse experiences detailed herein. Mr. Drew is ready to change, however, and indicated a desire and willingness to participate in substance abuse treatment. Accordingly, substance use treatment and supportive services are conditions of his probation. This factor therefore weighs in favor of sentencing under the YRA, to give Mr. Drew the opportunity to participate in these rehabilitative services.

(k) Capacity for rehabilitation: Mr. Drew has demonstrated that he is capable of rehabilitation and becoming a productive, law-abiding citizen. Indeed, he had been just such a person prior to arrest in this matter. He possesses substantial rehabilitative potential given that he is 19 years old and has no criminal history whatsoever. During the many months Mr. Drew spent in custody, he abided by the rules of the correctional institution. He has career and educational goals for himself that are within his reach. Prior to his incarceration, Mr. Drew maintained steady employment and helped support his family. The YRA Study concluded that Mr. Drew: "has the potential to improve his life circumstances if he can deconstruct the erroneous belief that he is inferior and replace it with a new core belief system." D.C. DOC Classification Committee's Findings and Conclusions at 8. This belief can be challenged and changed with mental health services. While it is always difficult to predict future behavior, Mr. Drew's prior history as a law-abiding citizen and his demonstrated commitment to his own rehabilitation provide him with a promising foundation for his eventual rehabilitation. As such, this factor weighs in favor of sentencing under the YRA.

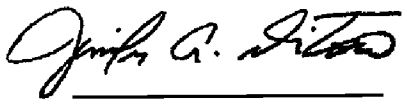
(l) Victim impact statement: No victim impact statement was made, though the Court notes that a young person was shot. Mr. Drew expressed remorse and shock that the Court finds sincere. This factor weighs neutrally with regard to sentencing under the YRA.

(m) Any other information the Court deems relevant to its decision: The structure and text of the YRA mandate that the nature of the offense is just one of several factors a trial judge must consider. Full consideration of all of the statutory factors, in particular, Mr. Drew's youth at the time of the offense, the absence of any prior arrests or other indicia

of criminal behavior, his demonstrated prospects for rehabilitation and his sincere expression of remorse all lead the Court to conclude that Mr. Drew should be treated as a youth offender for the purposes of sentencing. A sentence under the Youth Rehabilitation Act will hold him accountable while preserving his opportunity to develop into a productive member of society, free from criminal activity.

For the foregoing reasons, the Court concludes that Mr. Drew should be treated as a youth offender for the purpose of sentencing. Accordingly, the Court granted a sentence pursuant to the YRA in this case.

It is this 16th day of November, 2026, *nunc pro tunc* to November 13, 2026, so **ORDERED**.



Judge Jennifer A. Di Toro
Signed in chambers

E-served via CaseFileXpress:

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