



TESTIMONY FOR SB0123 Petition to Reduce Sentence

Bill Sponsor: Senator Carter

Committee: Judicial Proceedings

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Aileen Alex, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0123 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Incarceration rate of Black men in the state ranks among the highest in the country. Black men make up 14 percent of Maryland's general population but consist of 73 percent of the male prison population in the state, according to the Attorney General's Office. Black women make up 16 percent of the state's population but a disproportionate 53 percent of the female prison population (Washington Post, 10/26/23). And Maryland has the fourth highest rate of prisoners convicted as children, with the school to prison pipeline still a risk for disadvantaged students.

More needs to be done to address our systemic injustice in policing and inequity in the criminal justice system. This bill allows an inmate who has served at least 20 years to petition the court for a reduced sentence every 3 years for up to 3 petitions. The decision to grant the petition would be based on factors typically used in parole hearings.

SB0123 reduces the impact of discrimination in our criminal justice system that results in harsher sentences that appear to be race related. It not only benefits a prisoner unjustly sentenced but also stems the ancillary damage to their families. Moreover, reduced sentences save Maryland taxpayers over \$38,000 per inmate annually. Money that could be better spent on schools.

The Maryland Legislative Coalition continues to advocate for this and similar bills that chip away at the injustice evidenced in our incarceration rates while providing other benefits.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.