

SB123: Criminal Procedure: Petition to Reduce Sentence

Empowering Reentry and Second Chances

Honorable Members of the Judicial Committee,

I stand before you not only as a Forensic Peer Specialist for the Office of the Public Defender in Maryland but as a father, husband, brother, and active community member. My journey from a post-conviction sentence, overcoming a life-plus-15-year verdict for murder, echoes the transformative power of second chances. In my role as a mentor and religious advisor, I witness daily the potential for change and growth within individuals who, like me, entered prison undeveloped and immature. Yet, Maryland's current system lacks a comprehensive mechanism to recognize and support the redemption of those who've diligently demonstrated remorse and personal development.

As the proud owner and co-founder of a nonprofit focused on reentry equity, I implore you to consider the pivotal role second chances play in rebuilding lives. The Sentencing and Conviction Integrity Unit, currently limited to Prince George's County, should serve as a model for statewide implementation. We must acknowledge and reward the efforts of incarcerated individuals committed to personal transformation and community contribution. By expanding mechanisms like the Sentencing and Conviction Integrity Unit, we create a pathway for redemption and ensure that individuals returning to society are given the opportunity to thrive. Let us together embrace the power of rehabilitation, redemption, and second chances. I urge you to champion the cause of reentry equity and support the expansion of initiatives that recognize the potential for positive change within our community.

Sincerely,

Desmond Haneef-Perry, PRS

Co-Founder & Executive Director

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