



Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services

Office of the Secretary

6776 Reisterstown Road, Baltimore, Maryland 21215
410-585-3346 – TOLL FREE 877-379-8636 • www.dpssc.maryland.gov

STATE OF MARYLAND

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ASSISTANT SECRETARY
PROGRAMS, TREATMENT &
RE-ENTRY SERVICES

BILL: SENATE BILL 128

POSITION: LETTER OF SUPPORT

EXPLANATION:

COMMENTS: SB 128 requires the Maryland Parole Commission to consider the age of an incarcerated individual when determining whether to grant parole and alters how the Commission evaluates a request for medical parole. Under certain circumstances, evaluations for medical parole would include providing for a meeting between the incarcerated individual and the Commission and would require the Commission to develop procedures for assessing medical and geriatric parole requests.

- The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (Department) operates the Division of Correction (DOC), the Division of Pretrial Detention and Services (DPDS), and the Division of Parole and Probation (DPP).
- In accordance with Correctional Services Article (CSA) §7–201, the Maryland Parole Commission (Commission) was established in the Department.
- SB 128 expands the ability of parole commissioners to take into account the totality of a petitioner’s circumstances when considering a parole request, including an individual’s age and to consider whether the incarcerated individual will recidivate.
- The bill adds the definitions of “chronically debilitated or incapacitated” and “terminal illness” to CSA §7–309 while also describing the type of care an individual who is chronically debilitated or incapacitated receives.
- Describing the type of care for an incarcerated individual, who is chronically debilitated or incapacitated to include being physically incapable of presenting a danger to society by a physical or mental health condition, disease, or syndrome, provides the Commission with specific criteria from a medical professional that assists the Commission in making a determination for parole.

- The bill adds language requiring the Commission to consider the age of the incarcerated individual and the impact of age on reducing the risk of recidivation.
- The bill also requires reentry resources be made available to incarcerated individuals who are granted parole as the result of the proposed changes as well as adding a reporting requirement. The Department begins reentry planning at intake and is familiar with reporting requirements.
- SB 128 adds language that would allow the Commission to conduct parole hearings for incarcerated individuals, who are not otherwise prohibited from a parole hearing, and who are 60 years or older and who have served at least 15 years of their sentence to be eligible for a parole hearing beginning at age 60 and every two years after. Thus greatly expanding the number of individuals who may be eligible for medical parole. This language was previously under Criminal Law Article § 14-101, however, only one individual has been eligible for geriatric parole with this section under the crime of violence of statute.
- Finally, SB 128 removes the Governor from the medical parole decision process which would be consistent with the Senate Bill 202/Ch. 30 that passed in 2021 and removed the Governor from the regular parole process.

CONCLUSION: For these reasons, the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** Committee report on Senate Bill 128.