

February 1, 2024

Honorable Senator William C. Smith Jr.  
Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 East  
Annapolis, MD. 21401

Testimony in SUPPORT of **SENATE BILL – 123 (The Second Look Act)**

**CRIMINAL PROCEDURE - PETITION TO REDUCE SENTENCE**

*Sponsored by Senator Jill Carter*

Dear Chair William C. Smith Jr. and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:

My name is Anthony Wazir Muhammad (formerly known as Anthony Fair). Thirty-one years ago, on January 26, 1993, at the age of 15, I was arrested on two homicides charges in Baltimore City. I was ultimately convicted and sentenced to life plus 20-years in prison for the crimes that I committed. During my sentencing hearing, the judge mistakenly believed that I was unredeemable, unreformable, and that the actions that I committed were unreconcilable.

My sentencing judge stated that I had *“little prospect of ever being able to come out and function,”* and that I showed very *“little hope of rehabilitation.”* The judge was unconvinced that *“job training, education, and such would make [me] a safe citizen.”* And in her most condemning remarks, she stated that she believed if I was given the opportunity to do this again, *“it would happen.”*

Thankfully, my sentencing judge was all wrong about me! Sixteen-months ago, on September 20, 2022, I was released under the Maryland *Juvenile Restoration Act* (JRA). I served a total of 29-years, 7-months, and 29-days. Interestingly, the judge who released me said the complete opposite about me than the judge who originally sentenced me. In fact, the judge who released me stated that what I accomplished during my incarceration was so remarkable that in all her years on the bench, I was the very first violent offender that she had absolutely no reservations about releasing.

There are no words adequate enough to express the depths of my remorse for the crimes that I committed. I made a horrible decision. It was the worst decision I ever made in my life, and I will always deeply regret my actions. However, egregious as my crimes were, they were not the result of “*permanent incorrigibility,*” “*irreparable corruption,*” or “*exhibit such irretrievable depravity that rehabilitation is impossible.*” As the distinguished civil rights attorney, author of the book *Just Mercy*, and founder of the *Equal Justice Initiative*, Brian Stevenson, once said - “*Each of us is more than the worst thing we’ve ever done.*”

Since my release, I have now become part of the solution to crime and violence in the very same community where I was once part of the problem. Currently, I am a Community Engagement Specialist, for the *We Our Us* organization, a non-profit group that serves the community. We are the new front line in the fight to make our communities a safe and decent place to live. We are the “*Credible Messengers,*” that go door-to-door, block-by-block, street-by-street. We put boots on the ground in the most dangerous neighborhoods in Baltimore City as “*Messengers,*” “*Protectors,*” “*Connectors,*” and “*Mediators.*”

Thanks in no small part to the incredible work of returning citizens, particularly those who served life and long-term sentences, for the very first time in 9-years, Baltimore City witnessed the single largest reduction in homicides in almost a decade. While no one individual or organization can claim all the credit, what is undeniable, what is undisputable, is the positive contributions that long-term returning citizens are making in this effort.

Long-term returning citizens are working in collaboration with all of the community stake holders. There is NOTHING that long-term returning citizens are not doing as productive members of society. We are employed by multiple agencies in the Baltimore City government. We are consultants to the Baltimore City Police Department on best practices for community engagement.

We are partners with the Maryland DPSCS & DOC to provide re-entry services to returning citizens. We are currently working with the Maryland DJS to provide life coaching & mentorship services to help address what many are now mistakenly calling a juvenile crime surge.

Long-term returning citizens are helping all throughout the Baltimore City Public School system, in many capacities. We are in all of the Recreation Centers. We are on college campuses and universities throughout the State of Maryland. We are in law school programs and legal clinics here in Maryland. We are the leaders in non-profit organizations doing phenomenal community engagement work. We are business owners, entrepreneurs, homeowners, hard-working, tax paying citizens who are thoroughly engaged in the community.

Our message to this esteemed committee is this: there are a few hundred more just like us who are still locked behind the prison walls in Maryland. They are aging, and they are dying. They have served their time in prison - some 20, 30, 40, and yes, even 50 years in the Maryland prison system. No, they were not juveniles. They did not qualify for release under the Unger decision or the JRA. However, they deserve a second look. It is indisputable that they are no longer threats to public safety and we are confident that they will make positive contributions to society, if given the opportunity, just as those of us who stand before you today.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable vote on SB123. Thank You!

Respectfully submitted,  
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