

**TESTIMONY ON HB 724
MARYLAND SECOND LOOK ACT**

**House Judiciary Committee
February 13, 2024**

SUPPORT

Submitted by: **Resha Ingram**

Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett and members of the Judiciary Committee:

I, Resha Ingram am testifying in support of HB 724, the Maryland Second Look Act. I am submitting this testimony as a impacted family member

Passage of the Maryland Second Look Act would create a meaningful opportunity for sentence modification for incarcerated people after having served 20 years of their sentence. I firmly believe that those individuals who are able to demonstrate their growth and rehabilitation, such that they are no longer a threat to public safety, should have the opportunity for release.

I personally believe the passing of the bill can and will help the incarnated individuals, their families and the communities. People can change,after being incarcerated for 20 years or more. That is a long time to be away from loved ones. I think the vast majority of humans are redeemable. Just because we can't go back and change the past doesn't mean they can't make a difference moving forward. They are different people now. The loved ones can be reconnected with humanity. The possibility of my loved one coming home is one of the best feelings I've ever felt. His absence has left so many open wounds that need healing. Yes u can't make up for lost time but you can make a difference moving forward.This prison life isn't easy. On the inside or outside. It will be hard work that would need to be put in to rebuild some of the damaged relationships begin in prison for 20 years or more have caused. This change is necessary because every one deserves a second look (chance) I'm pretty sure everyone has done something and someone gave them a second look at changing for the better. We learn from our mistakes, so let's give them a chance to show that they have changed and give the opportunity to reconnect with the community. After spending 20 years in prison my loved one had meet some great men who that grew up in foster care. Now he has a soft spot for children in foster care and would like to things to help foster children and help the young men in the community.

This bill is an important tool in making meaningful opportunities for release happen, as currently, incarcerated people in MD can only petition the Court for modification within 90 days of sentencing, severely limiting any potential sentence modifications¹. Maryland judges used to have the ability to review sentences, an important safety valve for extreme sentences, but this opportunity was eliminated with a rule change in 2004². Furthermore for more than 25 years, Maryland's parole system was not available to people serving life with parole sentences. Now, the Governor has finally been removed from the parole process, but this is not enough to

remedy decades of wrongful denials which contributed to the bloated prison system and its extreme racial disparities.

This bill also has serious racial justice implications, given that of the 2,212 people serving life sentences in MD, 80% are Black³, a huge disparity when compared to the only 31% of Black Marylanders in the general population⁴. Shamefully, Maryland also leads the nation in sentencing young Black men to the longest prison terms, at a rate 25% higher than the next nearest state, Mississippi⁵.

Given the tendency for people to age out of crime and the very low recidivism rate for other individuals released from decades-long sentences, this decision is unlikely to negatively impact public safety. For example, in the past 12 years since the Maryland Supreme Court held that improper jury instructions invalidated the life with parole sentences of 235 people, 96% have remained in the community without incident⁶. These individuals, 90 percent of whom are Black, spent an average of 40 years behind bars but could have been contributing to our communities decades earlier. We know many more men and women serving decades-long sentences who have worked hard, hoping for their chance to reenter and succeed in their communities.

For these reasons, I encourage you to vote **favorably** on the **Maryland Second Look Act HB 724**.

Thank you.

¹ Maryland Rule 4-345

² [Court of Appeals of Maryland Rules Order](#)

³ [MD DPSCS FY 2022 Q4 Inmate Characteristics Statistics](#) (2022)

⁴ [United States Census Data](#) (2021)

⁵ Justice Policy Institute [Rethinking Approaches to Over Incarceration of Black Young Adults in Maryland](#) (2019)

⁶ Justice Policy Institute [Fact Sheet: The Ungers](#) (2018)