

Testimony before the House Judiciary Committee
Supporting SB 123, Maryland Second Look Act

Please support SB 123. My name is Edward Sabin. I am a retired state employee. I have been a volunteer at Jessup Correctional Institution (JCI) for over 25 years. In doing so I've met a number of men serving long sentences who rehabilitated themselves. They are facilitators in the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP), a volunteer program in which I also serve as a facilitator.

On Thursday, the Judiciary Committee will hear Senate Bill 123, widely known as the Second Look Act. It would create an opportunity for incarcerated people to have their sentence modified, generally after having served 20 years or reaching 60 years of age. It would also allow the state's attorney to move to modify a person's sentence at any time.

Those who can demonstrate their growth and rehabilitation and show that they are no longer a threat to public safety should have the opportunity for release. The bill is a step towards redressing racial injustice in the Maryland criminal justice system. Of the 2,212 people serving life sentences in Maryland, 80 percent are Black—a huge disparity when compared to the only 31 percent of Black Marylanders in the general population. Maryland also leads the nation in sentencing young Black men to the longest prison terms, at a rate 25 percent higher than the next most racially disparate state, Mississippi.

A right to petition for sentence reduction does not guarantee that a reduction will be granted. But for many reasons—justice, mercy after the passage of so many years, racial inequities, wastefulness, and cost—sentence modification should be at least a possible outcome for prisoners who have served 20 years in prison.

I urge you to give a favorable report to SB123. Thank you for your service to the people of Maryland,

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