

**TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 853  
MARYLAND SECOND LOOK ACT  
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
March 25, 2025**

**FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**

Submitted by: Sharon Y. Blake

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher and honorable members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

I, Sharon Y. Blake, am testifying in favor of the Maryland Second Look Act, House Bill 853, with amendments. I am submitting this testimony as a Baltimore County resident in District 10. Although I have had no one in my family impacted by an extended sentence of twenty years of incarceration in the Maryland penal system, I believe, as a citizen and an educator, that I have sufficient interest in this matter. I served 43 years as an educator in the Baltimore City Public School System, the majority of which was as a teacher of History at the high school level. In this role, I saw students end up in the Maryland prison system and I believe that serving twenty years in prison can bring about positive change as these young people reach adulthood. Adults who have demonstrated intellectual advancement, spiritual development, remorse, rehabilitation, I believe are no longer a risk or danger to society. Twenty years later, they are very different people. They are now mature persons who tend to have “aged out of crime” and are very unlikely to impact public safety in an undesirable manner. This is made evident by the landmark case of Maryland vs. Unger, where two hundred (200) Marylanders serving life sentences were released and thereafter had less than a four percent (4%) recidivism rate. The Maryland Second Look Act would provide a meaningful opportunity for sentence modification of these now reformed adults.

While I appreciate the greatly needed opportunity this bill provides for eligible incarcerated people, more is needed to impact real change, given it is disgraceful that Maryland is the frontrunner of states that sentence young Black men to the longest prison terms, at a rate twenty-five (25%) higher than the state of Mississippi including those serving Life Without Parole.

Therefore, I urge this honorable committee to vote favorably with amendments on House Bill 853, Maryland Second Look Act.

Thank you.