



Maryland Youth Advisory Council

c/o Governor's Office Children
100 Community Place,
Crownsville, MD 21032

Alex Hossainkhail, *Chair*

Thomas Evans, *Vice-Chair*
Folashade Epebinu, *Secretary*

March 25, 2025

Re: HB853 | Postconviction Review - Procedure to Reduce Duration of Sentence (Maryland Second Look Act)

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

The Maryland Youth Advisory Council prides itself on being a coalition of diverse young advocates and leaders who serve as a voice for youth in the state of Maryland. As leaders in our communities, and as appointees of the Governor, President of the Senate, Speaker of the House, Maryland Association of Student Councils, Maryland Higher Education Commission, and the University System of Maryland, we take every opportunity to address relevant issues by influencing legislation, spreading public awareness and serving as a liaison between youth and policymakers regarding issues facing youth.

HB 853 offers a great opportunity for justice, allowing individuals who have demonstrated rehabilitation and personal growth the ability to petition for a reduced sentence after serving at least 20 years of confinement.

Our criminal justice system must be dynamic, reflecting both accountability and the possibility of redemption. **HB 853** acknowledges that people are capable of change. By considering factors like age at the time of the offense, evidence of rehabilitation, participation in educational or vocational programs, and demonstrated maturity, this bill ensures that second chances are available to those who have earned them.

The bill maintains judicial discretion, as courts will carefully evaluate each petition on a case-by-case basis, considering the individual's rehabilitation efforts, public safety, and victim input. For individuals over 60 years old or those who have served 30 years or more, the presumption of non-dangerousness is a fair recognition of reduced recidivism rates among older incarcerated individuals. **HB 853** addresses the reality that racial and socioeconomic disparities are prevalent in sentencing¹. Providing a structured and

¹ "2023 Demographic Differences in Federal Sentencing." 2023. United States Sentencing Commission. November 9, 2023. <https://www.ussc.gov/research/research-reports/2023-demographic-differences-federal-sentencing?>

equitable mechanism for sentence reconsideration helps mitigate some of these injustices, fostering a more compassionate and fair legal system.

Supporting **HB 853** means supporting rehabilitation, public safety, and the belief that individuals can change. For these reasons, the council requests a favorable report on this bill. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alex Hossainkhail". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Alex" and last name "Hossainkhail" clearly distinguishable.

Alex Hossainkhail
Maryland Youth Advisory Council