

**TESTIMONY ON HB853
MARYLAND SECOND LOOK ACT
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
March 25, 2025**

Favorable with Amendments

Submitted by: Danielle Williams

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

I, Danielle Williams, am testifying in support of HB853, the Maryland Second Look Act. I am submitting this testimony as a community member in District 4, as well as an 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 after having served decades of incarceration, all individuals should have the ability to demonstrate their growth and rehabilitation. It is my belief that in most, if not all cases individuals age out of criminal behavior such that they are no longer a threat to public safety and therefore should have the opportunity to demonstrate that change.

As a licensed clinical social worker, I have had the pleasure of working with individuals within the correctional institution who over a period has been able to demonstrate change in not only mindset but behavior as well. In fact, I have seen incarcerated individuals return to society after long periods of incarceration and demonstrate not only change for themselves but work towards change 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.

A Second look should be a redemptive pathway to allow incarcerated individuals the opportunity to demonstrate reform. They should be able to use their past as a faucet of purpose and empowerment rather than confined and in despair. In fact, the mere idea of a second chance will empower those who would otherwise have no hope to work towards change. For these reasons, I encourage you to vote favorable with amendments on the Maryland Second Look Act HB853.

Thank you,
Danielle Williams, LCSW-C, LICSW