

**Testimony of Roberta Roper in Opposition to House Bill 853- Criminal
Procedure- Petition to Reduce a Sentence
March 25, 2025**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the (Senate Judicial Proceeding) Committee, for the opportunity to testify in opposition to HB 853. I am compelled to speak not only about my family's personal experience, but on behalf of the many survivors served by the Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc. (MCVRC) for the past forty-three years. Some of you know that MCVRC was originally founded as the Stephanie Roper Committee and Foundation, Inc. in tribute to the daughter who was brutally taken from us in 1982. Stephanie was kidnapped, tortured, raped, and brutally murdered by two men who then began dismembering her body and setting it on fire. At trial, we were shut out of the courtroom and silenced at sentencing. Those experiences nearly destroyed our family, challenging everything we valued, confidence in government, trust in people, faith in God. It shattered our community and left enduring wounds. Gratefully, we have worked very hard to change the criminal justice system's treatment of crime victims.

I have spent the last four decades of my life advocating for victims' rights and services and being the voice for those who have been forever silenced. Bills like HB 853 threaten public safety and re-victimizes survivors! It is not only devastating to scores of victims and survivors but destroys public trust and confidence in the criminal justice system. Both victims and citizens can correctly question where is the truth in sentencing? Some crimes are so horrific in their nature that they deserve an appropriate punishment. Victims and survivors, no less than their rapists and killers, deserve compassion and some sense of finality.

Victims and survivors, having suffered devastating trauma, shouldn't have to endure endless re-victimization, and the cost of having to publicly dredge up their worst memories, to rip open their partially healed psychological wounds and to recount the human indignity and horrible memories that they must struggle with every day of their lives.

I respectfully ask you to restore confidence in our criminal justice system and not approve HB 853. The criminal system belongs to all of us. We must ensure that it serves all of us.

Roberta Roper, Founder, Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc.

HB 853 authorizes an individual who was 25 years old or younger and has served twenty years to petition a court for a reduction in sentence and allowing that petition to be repeated every three years.

by my husband and me

MCVRC has successfully advocated for the passage of more than 100 laws to provide victims with rights and services. Today, MCVRC is recognized as one of our

nation's most distinguished and successful non-profits who support, advocate and represent the legal interest of crime victims and survivors.

One of our daughter's killers, having declined the right to a parole hearing, recently petitioned a court seeking release from prison. The Parole Commission, who has experts on their staff, is best equipped to review an offender's readiness for release. At that court hearing in December 2024, I was finally given the opportunity to exercise my right to present a victim impact statement after more than 42 years.