

Greetings Chair Smith and Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and the Judicial Proceedings Committee. For the record, I am Delegate Cheryl Pasteur, District 11A, Baltimore County, regarding HB 0853, Senate Bill 0291, not an easy bill by any measure. HB853 passed third reader on March 15, 2025 and is a Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland priority. Second Look, as amended, is built on the Juvenile Restoration Act and the Unger v. Maryland decision; these measures have demonstrated that sentence reconsideration works. Second Look authorizes individuals to petition the Courts to reduce the duration of a certain sentence if the individual was convicted between ages 18 and under 25. This individual was not sentenced to life without the possibility of parole, not a sex offender as defined in section 11-701 of the Maryland Criminal Procedure Code and has served at least twenty years. The individual must have met at least 10 significant criteria which includes victim or victim representative statements, or anything the judge requests related to readiness to re-enter society.

Second Look, as amended, is not a given but allows the courts to reassess sentences based on behavior, designed to safeguard public safety and ensuring accountability. The Courts may only reduce a sentence if it finds that the individual is not a danger to the public. Second Look builds on the recognition that redemption is possible! It is not a partisan issue; it is a moral and economic necessity! It is an opportunity to live up to the values we profess. Currently, 24 states, red, blue, purple, have enacted Second Look initiatives in many ways, with other states watching Maryland. In November, Senator Cory Booker presented the Second Look Act bill in Congress. Maryland has the highest rate of incarceration and incarceration of African Americans of any state in this country. The Act creates a legal pathway for reviewing excessive sentences that disproportionately impact Black Marylanders.

Why Second Look and not parole? Around the country, legislators and Courts are looking to judicial review as a more effective means to reconsider a person's fitness to reenter society. It is an opportunity to evaluate whether sentences-imposed decades ago remain just under current sentencing policies and public sentiment. For Maryland, it will break a vicious cycle among our youth and of violence in prisons. You moved this bill last Session and the House faltered. You were our example, and I am hopeful that you will stand up for this measure this year!