



**Position: Favorable  
Judiciary Committee**

**HB853: Criminal Procedure - Petition to Reduce Sentence (Maryland Second Look Act)**

To: The Honorable Delegates Pasteur, Acevero, Addison, Alston, Amprey, Bofo, Boyce, Charkoudian, Conaway, Crutchfield, Davis, Embry, Fair, Fennell, Harris, Harrison, Holmes, Ivey, A. Johnson, J. Lewis, J. Long, Martinez, McCaskill, Mireku-North, Palakovich Carr, Patterson, Pena-Melnyk, Phillips, Queen, Roberson, Rogers, Ruff, Ruth, Simmons, Smith, Taveras, Taylor, Toles, Turner, Wells, White Holland, Wilkins, Williams, Woods, and Young

Greetings,

My name is Lailah Williams and I am the Advocacy Intern for Black Girls Vote, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization committed to engaging, educating, and empowering black women to activate their voice by using their vote. I would like to thank the Judiciary Committee for the opportunity to share why this issue is important to our organization.

Black Girls Vote has four main pillars: economic development, education, healthcare and of course voting rights. We are committed to democracy and protecting our right to free and fair elections. We do this by cultivating a community of informed citizens and mobilizing them on the trail of advocacy. Recognizing the importance and impact of all citizens in democracy, we intentionally focus our efforts on ensuring that we protect the rights of incarcerated individuals.

For this reason, we urge support for HB853 which would authorize an individual to file a petition with the court to reduce the sentence if the individual has served at least 20 years of the term of confinement and at least 5 years have passed since the court decided any previous petition. Below you will find more reasons why it is imperative that we support incarcerated individuals:

1. In 2018, the bipartisan First Step Act, a sweeping criminal justice reform bill designed to promote rehabilitation, lower recidivism, and reduce excessive sentences in the federal prison system.<sup>1</sup>
2. The First Step Act includes a range such as enhanced judicial discretion, created earned time credits, increased good time credits, reduced certain mandatory minimum sentences, and expanded the safety valve that allows persons with minor prior convictions to serve less time than previously mandated. Similar advocacy in Maryland can impact people of color who are disproportionately affected.<sup>2</sup>

Sincerely,

Lailah Williams, Advocacy Intern  
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<sup>1</sup><https://www.sentencingproject.org/policy-brief/the-first-step-act-ending-mass-incarceration-in-federal-prisons/>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.sentencingproject.org/policy-brief/the-first-step-act-ending-mass-incarceration-in-federal-prisons/>