



Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc.

Continuing the Missions of the Stephanie Roper Committee and Foundation, Inc.

☎ 877-VICTIM-1 (877-842-8461) ✉ [mail@mdcrimevictims.org](mailto:mail@mdcrimevictims.org) 🌐 [mdcrimevictims.org](http://mdcrimevictims.org)

## LETTER IN OPPOSITION OF SENATE BILL 162

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### Headquarters

1001 Prince George's Boulevard  
Suite 750  
Upper Marlboro, MD 20774  
301-952-0063  
877-842-8461 (toll free)  
240-929-0526 (fax)

### Baltimore

1 North Charles Street  
Suite 700  
Baltimore, MD 21201

### Carroll, Howard, & Baltimore Counties

Oakland Manor  
5430 Vantage Point Road  
Columbia, MD 21044  
240-335-4032

### Eastern Shore

240-335-4012

### Frederick & Montgomery Counties

240-335-4021

### Southern Maryland

301-952-0063

### Western Maryland

59 Prospect Square  
Suite 6  
Cumberland, MD 21502  
240-335-4013

The Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center (MCVRC) urges an unfavorable vote on SB 162.

The 2021 Juvenile Restoration Act (JRA) permits youth convicted in adult court before October 2021 to petition for sentence modification three times after serving 20 years. The JRA also prohibits life without parole for those under 18 and allows courts to waive mandatory minimums for juvenile offenders. These three modification hearings were not found appropriate for post-2021 cases, recognizing the multiple reforms.

Post-JRA (10/1/2021), Maryland case law and Sentencing Guidelines already direct judges to consider a defendant's youth, brain development, mental/physical condition, health, and rehabilitation potential—departing below guidelines when appropriate. Brain science is now standard in sentencing, as affirmed by U.S. Supreme Court precedents like *Miller v. Alabama* and state cases.

The JRA stemmed from testimonials that pre-2021 courts ignored or did not give enough weight to offenders' youthful brains and impulsivity. Adolescent neurodevelopment is a concept now fully embedded in Maryland sentencing. To pass SB 162 is to ignore that and make a choice to further disempower and ignore the pain of victims.

SB 162 disrespects these judicial safeguards and, above all, the victims of violent crime. Finality in sentencing provides essential closure, allowing survivors to heal from unimaginable trauma. Multiple modification hearings decades later force victims to relive their pain repeatedly, prioritizing offenders over irreversible harm to Maryland families.

As the nation's largest nonprofit providing legal services to crime victims, MCVRC speaks for Maryland survivors. We urge an unfavorable vote on SB 162, which ignores victims' suffering and the robust protections already in place.

Sincerely,

Laura Corbett Wilt, Senior Supervising Attorney  
240-335-4004; [lwilt@mdcrimevictims.org](mailto:lwilt@mdcrimevictims.org)

Joined by: Joanna Mupanduki, Deputy Director & Kurt Wolfgang, Executive Director