

Senate Bill 162
Criminal Procedure – Motion to Reduce Duration of Sentence –
Repeal of Sentencing Date Limitation
Judicial Proceedings Committee – January 27, 2026
FAVORABLE

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony in support of Senate Bill 162. I am a long-time resident of Montgomery County. I previously served as a citizen member of the Montgomery County Commission on Juvenile Justice.

SB 162 would eliminate language in the Juvenile Restoration Act (JRA) that currently restricts eligibility for possible resentencing to individuals who were sentenced as children before October 1, 2021. Unless this language is eliminated, individuals sentenced as children on or after October 1, 2021, would be treated less favorably than individuals sentenced at ages 18 to 24, who are now eligible for reconsideration under legislative changes that were in the 2025 session. **It makes no sense to leave behind individuals who were sentenced as children when it is still the case that the opportunities provided under the JRA for judicial review serve the public’s interest in supporting the rehabilitation of juveniles, addressing mass incarceration, and fostering safe and healthy communities.**

Research on brain development tells us that teenagers have brains that are not fully developed. As a result, they are less capable of controlling their emotions and more impulsive in stressful situations. They lack maturity and the ability to weigh the consequences of their actions. **The Supreme Court has long recognized that these differences in brain development between children and adults make children less culpable.** It was this evidence on brain science that Maryland lawmakers found persuasive when they enacted the JRA.

It is also clear that judges can be trusted to make good judgments about the readiness of individuals who have spent at least 20 years behind the prison walls to return to their communities and lead productive lives. Since the enactment of the JRA, judges have recognized the enormous capacity of young people to change after 20 years of incarceration but have not treated the JRA as a get-out-of-jail-free card. The JRA has proved to be good law.

I believe in giving individuals second chances because the social, human, moral, and economic costs of keeping people behind bars longer than needed to achieve the goals of incarceration are enormous. If given a second chance, individuals who caused harm to others during their adolescence can become caring family members, good neighbors, and productive members of the community. We all benefit when people who have been incarcerated are successfully reintegrated into the community.

For these reasons, I urge a Favorable report on SB 162. This bill makes a commonsense change and is good public policy.

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