

TO:

Senator William C. Smith, Jr., Chair

Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair

Members of the *Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee*:

FROM:

Anthony Wazir Muhammad

Maryland Parole Partnership / ACLU of Maryland

amuhammad@aclu-md.org

RE: SENATE BILL 162

*Criminal Procedure – Motion to Reduce Duration of Sentence –
Repeal of Sentencing Date Limitation*

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

January 23, 2026

Greetings,

I respectfully submit this written testimony for the official record to express my **SUPPORT** for *Senate Bill 162*.

I am a returning citizen. At the age of 15, I was arrested for two homicide charges in the City of Baltimore. I was ultimately convicted and sentenced to life plus a consecutive 20-years in prison.

The judge who sentenced me *mistakenly* believed that I was unredeemable, unreformable, and that the actions I committed were unreconcilable. Despite having no prior adult conviction, the judge said it was a shame that someone so young could go so far wrong at such an early age in life. She stated that I had “*little prospect of ever being able to come out and function,*” and that I showed very “*little hope of rehabilitation.*” The judge was unconvinced that “*job training, education, and such would make [me] a safe citizen,*” and in her most condemning remarks stated her belief that if I was ever given the opportunity to commit the crimes again “*it would happen.*”

Thankfully, the judge who sentenced me was all wrong about me. Egregious as my crimes were, they were not the result of “*permanent incorrigibility,*” “*irreparable corruption,*” or “*exhibit such irretrievable depravity that rehabilitation is impossible,*” as articulated in several cases by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Today, I respectfully submit to this committee that not only am I redeemed, reformed, and rehabilitated, but reconciled with the family of my victims who have granted me their forgiveness after successfully completing victim/offender mediation.

I served a total of 29-YEARS, 7-MONTHS, & 29-DAYS before I was released under the Maryland Juvenile Restoration Act on September 20, 2022. There are no words adequate enough to express the depths of my remorse for the crimes I committed. I made a horrible decision! It was the worst decision I ever made in my life; a painful decision that I deeply regret – daily!

I will ALWAYS accept responsibility for my actions and continue to express my sincere and deep remorse. Additionally, as famous civil rights attorney, author of the book *Just Mercy*, and founder of the *Equal Justice Initiative*, Brian Stevenson, once said: ***“Each of us is more than the worst thing we have ever done.”***

I am very pleased to inform this committee that I am one of many JRA releases who have successfully reintegrated back into society, who collectively share a less than 4% recidivism rate. Since the day of my release, I continue to vigorously work 3-jobs: the *Maryland Parole Partnership* at the *ACLU of Maryland*; I am a Community Engagement Specialist with *We Our Us*, where I use my lived experience as a credible messenger doing community violence intervention; and I am a Youth Mentor with *Baltimore Brothers, Inc.*, helping other youth not make the same bad decisions I made.

SB 162 is a simple bill that ensures fundamental fairness. It is a common-sense, straightforward technical fix to ensure disparities doesn't exist, and a meaningful opportunity for a sentence review hearing (not a guarantee of release) is available to all children who commit crimes in Maryland when they are under the age 18 - regardless of when they are sentenced for the crime.

For these reasons, I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 162. Thank you for your time and consideration of this legislation.