

BILL: Senate Bill 162

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

DATE: January 23, 2026

POSITION: SUPPORT

COMMITTEE: Judicial Proceedings Committee

CONTACT: Tavon ElsezyYoung / Emergence Incorporated

Chair Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

Emergence Incorporated respectfully submits this testimony for the official record to express our **SUPPORT for Senate Bill 162**. Our organization is committed to the advocacy and advancement of youth to be afforded second and third chances to recover lives of hope, purpose, and destiny. Emergence Inc.'s support for this bill sits at the core of organizations purpose to see the vulnerable and less fortunate emerge from dark and obscure pasts to recover a bright future.

SB 162 is a simple bill that ensures fundamental fairness and compliance with the U.S. Constitution in sentencing review.

Last session, the Maryland Second Look Act expanded the judicial review mechanism to include certain individuals who were ages 18 to 24 at the time of their offense. This has created an unconstitutional inconsistency, where individuals ages 18 to 24 receive an opportunity for review while individuals under 18 do not. For example, if a 15-year-old child and a 24-year-old individual were arrested today as co-defendants, the 24-year-old would receive sentence review after 20 years, while the 15-year-old youth would not. After a decade and a half of U.S. Supreme Court jurisprudence emphasizing how children are different than adults for the purposes of criminal sentencing, it is contrary to Constitutional protections that individuals 18 and over receive sentencing review while children under 18 do not.

SB 162 is a common-sense, straightforward technical fix to ensure these disparities don't exist. A meaningful opportunity for review should be available to all children under 18, regardless of when they were sentenced.

Simply put, if the heart of the Maryland Second Look Act is to provide an opportunity to reassess criminal penalties, evaluate the current standing of young offenders, and consider the future potential of individuals sentenced at an early age, why would Maryland, in good conscience, exclude youth offenders under 18? We have the opportunity to right this wrong.

We urge a favorable reporting on Senate Bill 162. Thank you for your serious consideration of this legislation.

Sincerely,

Tavon Elsezy-Young, CEO & Executive Director
Emergence Incorporated
Emerge-Gents