

HOUSE BILL 16

E5
HB 1156/25 – JUD

(PRE-FILED)

6lr0856

By: ~~Delegate Phillips~~ Delegates Phillips, Simmons, Moreno, Moon, Conaway, and Williams

Requested: September 16, 2025

Introduced and read first time: January 14, 2026

Assigned to: Judiciary

Committee Report: Favorable with amendments

House action: Adopted with floor amendments

Read second time: March 9, 2026

CHAPTER _____

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Correctional Services – Maryland Parole Commission – Members and Hearing**
3 **Examiners**

4 FOR the purpose of ~~altering the number of members of the Maryland Parole Commission;~~
5 altering the appointing authority and method of appointment of parole
6 commissioners; ~~repealing the authority of the Commission to appoint and utilize~~
7 ~~hearing examiners;~~ requiring a new commissioner to be appointed within a certain
8 number of days under certain circumstances; prohibiting a hearing examiner
9 appointed under certain authority from serving for more than a certain number of
10 days; altering certain requirements for hearing examiners; requiring a vote of the
11 majority of commissioners appointed to the Maryland Parole Commission, instead of
12 a certain minimum number, to approve a certain incarcerated individual for parole;
13 and generally relating to the Maryland Parole Commission.

14 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

15 Article – Correctional Services

16 Section 7-202, 7-204, 7-205(a), and 7-307, ~~7-207, 7-302, 7-303, and 7-305~~

17 Annotated Code of Maryland

18 (2025 Replacement Volume)

19 ~~BY repealing~~

20 ~~Article – Correctional Services~~

21 ~~Section 7-306~~

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Underlining indicates amendments to bill.

~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken from the bill by amendment or deleted from the law by amendment.



~~Annotated Code of Maryland
(2025 Replacement Volume)~~

~~BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,~~

~~Article – Correctional Services~~

~~Section 7-307~~

~~Annotated Code of Maryland
(2025 Replacement Volume)~~

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Correctional Services

7–202.

(a) (1) The Commission consists of ~~[ten]~~ **AT LEAST 15 BUT NOT MORE THAN 20** members.

(2) **(I)** [With the approval of the] **SUBJECT TO SUBPARAGRAPH (III) OF THIS PARAGRAPH, THE** Governor [and the advice and consent of the Senate, the Secretary] shall appoint the members of the Commission **FROM AMONG NOMINEES CHOSEN BY A PANEL CONSISTING OF:**

1. **THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE MARYLAND POLICE TRAINING AND STANDARDS COMMISSION;**

2. **THE PUBLIC DEFENDER OF MARYLAND;**

3. **THE PRESIDENT OF THE MARYLAND STATE’S ATTORNEYS’ ASSOCIATION;**

4. **THREE SERVICE PROVIDERS FROM THE FIELDS OF MENTAL HEALTH, SUBSTANCE USE TREATMENT, VOCATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL TRAINING, OR COMMUNITY ORGANIZING, APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR;**

5. **THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION;**

6. **THE PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS – MARYLAND CHAPTER, OR THE PRESIDENT’S DESIGNEE;**

7. **THREE MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC, APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR, INCLUDING:**

1 **A. AT LEAST ONE MARYLAND RESIDENT WHO WAS**
2 **FORMERLY INCARCERATED IN A STATE CORRECTIONAL FACILITY; AND**

3 **B. AT LEAST ONE MARYLAND RESIDENT WHO IS AN**
4 **IMMEDIATE RELATIVE OF AN INDIVIDUAL WHO IS CURRENTLY, OR WAS FORMERLY,**
5 **INCARCERATED IN A STATE CORRECTIONAL FACILITY; AND**

6 **8. ONE PRISONERS' RIGHTS ADVOCATE, CHOSEN BY THE**
7 **GOVERNOR; AND**

8 **9. ONE VICTIM'S RIGHTS ADVOCATE, CHOSEN BY THE**
9 **GOVERNOR.**

10 **(II) THE PANEL SHALL SUBMIT TO THE GOVERNOR THE NAMES**
11 **OF AT LEAST THREE QUALIFIED NOMINEES FOR EACH COMMISSIONER VACANCY TO**
12 **BE FILLED.**

13 **(III) THE REQUIREMENT FOR NOMINATION BY THE PANEL**
14 **UNDER THIS PARAGRAPH APPLIES ONLY TO AN INITIAL TERM AS COMMISSIONER**
15 **AND NOT TO ANY SUBSEQUENT CONSECUTIVE TERM OF A SITTING COMMISSIONER**
16 **WHOSE INITIAL APPOINTMENT TO OFFICE WAS MADE PURSUANT TO PANEL**
17 **NOMINATION.**

18 (b) Each commissioner shall:

19 (1) be appointed without regard to political affiliation;

20 (2) be a resident of the State; and

21 (3) have training and experience in law, sociology, psychology, psychiatry,
22 education, social work, or criminology.

23 (c) Each commissioner:

24 (1) shall devote full time to the duties of the Commission; and

25 (2) may not have any other employment that conflicts with the
26 commissioner's devotion of full time to the duties of the Commission.

27 (d) (1) The term of a commissioner is 6 years.

28 (2) At the end of a term, a commissioner continues to serve until a successor
29 is appointed and qualifies.

1 (3) A commissioner who is appointed after a term has begun serves only for
2 the rest of the term and until a successor is appointed and qualifies.

3 (e) (1) With the approval of the Governor, the Secretary may remove a
4 commissioner for disability, neglect of duty, or misconduct in office.

5 (2) Before removing a commissioner, the Secretary shall:

6 (i) give the commissioner written notice of the charges against the
7 commissioner; and

8 (ii) hold a public hearing on the charges.

9 (f) ~~¶(1)~~ **IF THERE IS A VACANCY ON THE COMMISSION, OR IF** a commissioner
10 is unable to perform the commissioner's duties because of sickness, incapacity, or
11 disqualification, the Secretary may appoint a hearing examiner to the Commission to
12 perform those duties until that commissioner is able to resume those duties or until a new
13 commissioner is appointed and qualifies.

14 (2) **A NEW COMMISSIONER SHALL BE APPOINTED WITHIN 90 DAYS**
15 **AFTER A VACANCY.**

16 **(3)** A hearing examiner appointed under this subsection is entitled to the
17 same compensation as a commissioner.

18 ~~¶(3)~~ **(4)** A hearing examiner appointed under this subsection may not:

19 **(I) SERVE FOR MORE THAN 90 DAYS; OR**

20 **(II)** participate in a proceeding before the Commission in which the
21 hearing examiner participated as a hearing examiner.

22 ~~(g)¶~~ With the approval of the Governor, the Secretary shall designate a
23 chairperson of the Commission from among its members.

24 7-204.

25 (a) ~~¶(1)¶~~ The Commission shall appoint the staff necessary to perform the duties
26 of the Commission.

27 ~~¶(2)¶ (B)~~ The activities of the staff may not duplicate or conflict with the
28 functions and services of the Division of Parole and Probation.

29 ~~¶(3)¶ (C)~~ Except as otherwise provided by law, the staff is subject to the
30 provisions of Title 6, Subtitle 4 of the State Personnel and Pensions Article.

1 ~~¶~~(b) (1) (i) The Secretary may appoint the hearing examiners necessary to
2 conduct parole release hearings under paragraph (2) of this subsection, as provided in the
3 State budget.

4 (ii) Each hearing examiner shall:

5 1. be appointed without regard to political affiliation;

6 2. be a resident of the State; ~~and~~

7 3. ~~have training and experience in law, sociology, psychology,~~
8 ~~psychiatry, education, social work, or criminology~~ **HOLD AN UNDERGRADUATE OR**
9 **ADVANCED DEGREE IN PSYCHOLOGY, PSYCHIATRY, SOCIAL WORK, EDUCATION, OR**
10 **COMMUNITY ORGANIZING OR HAVE ATTAINED THE EQUIVALENT OF THOSE DEGREES**
11 **THROUGH TRAINING OR EXPERIENCE; AND**

12 **4. HAVE TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE IN A FIELD LISTED**
13 **UNDER ITEM 3 OF THIS SUBPARAGRAPH OR IN LAW OR CRIMINOLOGY.**

14 (iii) A hearing examiner is entitled to compensation in accordance
15 with the State budget.

16 (2) A hearing examiner or a commissioner acting as a hearing examiner
17 may hear cases for parole release that are not required to be heard by the Commission
18 under § 7-205(a)(3) of this subtitle. ~~¶~~

19 **(3) (I) SUBJECT TO SUBPARAGRAPH (II) OF THIS PARAGRAPH, NOT**
20 **MORE THAN 30% OF HEARING EXAMINERS MAY HAVE BEEN PREVIOUSLY EMPLOYED**
21 **IN THE FIELDS OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES OR LAW ENFORCEMENT.**

22 **(II) THE SECRETARY MAY NOT TERMINATE A HEARING**
23 **EXAMINER EMPLOYED ON OCTOBER 1, 2026, IN ORDER TO REACH THE THRESHOLD**
24 **REQUIRED UNDER SUBPARAGRAPH (I) OF THIS PARAGRAPH.**

25 7-205.

26 (a) The Commission has the exclusive power to:

27 (1) authorize the parole of an individual sentenced under the laws of the
28 State to any correctional facility in the State;

29 (2) negotiate, enter into, and sign predetermined parole release
30 agreements as provided under subsection (b) of this section;

31 (3) hear cases for parole or administrative release ~~¶~~in which:

1 (i) the Commissioner of Correction, after reviewing the
2 recommendation of the appropriate managing official, objects to a parole;

3 (ii) the incarcerated individual was convicted of a homicide;

4 (iii) the incarcerated individual is serving a sentence of ~~life~~
5 ~~imprisonment~~ **NOT LESS THAN 15 YEARS CONFINEMENT FOR A SINGLE CONVICTION;**

6 (iv) the parole hearing is open to the public under § 7–304 of this title;

7 (v) the incarcerated individual fails to meet the requirements of the
8 administrative release process established under § 7–301.1 of this title;

9 (vi) a victim requests a hearing as provided under § 7–301.1 of this
10 title; or

11 (vii) the Commission finds that a hearing for administrative release
12 is necessary under § 7–301.1 of this title~~;~~;

13 (4) ~~hear~~ exceptions to recommendations of a hearing examiner or a
14 commissioner acting as a hearing examiner;

15 (5) review summarily all recommendations of a hearing examiner or a
16 commissioner acting as a hearing examiner to which an exception has not been filed;

17 ~~(6)~~ hear a case for parole in absentia when an individual who was
18 sentenced in this State to serve a term of imprisonment is in a correctional facility of a
19 jurisdiction other than this State;

20 ~~[(7)] (5)~~ hear cases of parole revocation;

21 ~~[(8)] (6)~~ if delegated by the Governor, hear cases involving an alleged
22 violation of a conditional pardon; and

23 ~~[(9)] (7)~~ determine conditions for administrative release under § 7–301.1
24 of this title.

25 ~~7–207.~~

26 ~~(a) [(1)] Subject to the approval of the Secretary, the Commission shall adopt~~
27 ~~regulations governing its policies and activities under this title.~~

28 ~~[(2)] (B) Notwithstanding the provisions of § 10–101(g)(2)(i) of the State~~
29 ~~Government Article, regulations adopted under [paragraph (1) of this subsection]~~
30 ~~SUBSECTION (A) OF THIS SECTION shall comply with Title 10, Subtitle 1 of the State~~
31 ~~Government Article.~~

1 ~~[(b) The Commission may adopt regulations governing:~~

2 ~~(1) the conduct of proceedings before it or the hearing examiners; and~~

3 ~~(2) the review and disposition of written exceptions to the recommendation~~
4 ~~of a hearing examiner.]~~

5 ~~7-302.~~

6 ~~The Commission [or the Commission's hearing examiners] shall hear cases for~~
7 ~~parole release:~~

8 ~~(1) at least once each month at each correctional facility in the Division of~~
9 ~~Correction; and~~

10 ~~(2) as often as necessary at other correctional facilities in the State at~~
11 ~~which incarcerated individuals eligible for parole consideration are confined.~~

12 ~~7-303.~~

13 ~~(a) Before any hearing on parole release, the Commission shall give the~~
14 ~~incarcerated individual adequate and timely written notice of:~~

15 ~~(1) the date, time, and place of the hearing; and~~

16 ~~(2) the factors that the Commission [or hearing examiner] will consider in~~
17 ~~determining whether the incarcerated individual is suitable for parole.~~

18 ~~(b) (1) (i) Except as provided in subparagraph (ii) of this paragraph, the~~
19 ~~notice also shall indicate that, before the hearing, the incarcerated individual or the~~
20 ~~incarcerated individual's representative may, on request, examine any document that the~~
21 ~~Commission [or hearing examiner] will use in determining whether the incarcerated~~
22 ~~individual is suitable for parole.~~

23 ~~(ii) A document, or a portion of it, is not available for examination, if~~
24 ~~the Commission determines that:~~

25 ~~1. the document or portion contains a diagnostic opinion;~~

26 ~~2. the incarcerated individual's knowledge of the document~~
27 ~~or portion would disrupt seriously a program of rehabilitation;~~

28 ~~3. the document or portion contains sources of information~~
29 ~~obtained on a promise of confidentiality; or~~

30 ~~4. the document or portion is otherwise privileged.~~

1 (iii) ~~If the Commission determines that a document or a portion of it~~
2 ~~is not available for examination, the Commission shall notify the incarcerated individual~~
3 ~~that:~~

4 1. ~~the document or portion is not available for examination;~~
5 ~~and~~

6 2. ~~on request and if appropriate, the Commission will provide~~
7 ~~the incarcerated individual or the incarcerated individual's representative with the~~
8 ~~substance of any information contained in the document or portion.~~

9 (2) ~~The Commission shall delete the address and phone number of the~~
10 ~~victim or the victim's designated representative from a document before the incarcerated~~
11 ~~individual or the incarcerated individual's representative examines the document.~~

12 ~~7-305.~~

13 ~~Each [hearing examiner and] commissioner determining whether an incarcerated~~
14 ~~individual is suitable for parole, and the Commission before entering into a predetermined~~
15 ~~parole release agreement, shall consider:~~

16 (1) ~~the circumstances surrounding the crime;~~

17 (2) ~~the physical, mental, and moral qualifications of the incarcerated~~
18 ~~individual;~~

19 (3) ~~the progress of the incarcerated individual during confinement,~~
20 ~~including the academic progress of the incarcerated individual in the mandatory education~~
21 ~~program required under § 22-102 of the Education Article;~~

22 (4) ~~a report on a drug or alcohol evaluation that has been conducted on the~~
23 ~~incarcerated individual, including any recommendations concerning the incarcerated~~
24 ~~individual's amenability for treatment and the availability of an appropriate treatment~~
25 ~~program;~~

26 (5) ~~whether, taking into account the totality of the circumstances including~~
27 ~~the age of the incarcerated individual, there is reasonable probability that the incarcerated~~
28 ~~individual, if released on parole, will not recidivate;~~

29 (6) ~~whether release of the incarcerated individual on parole is compatible~~
30 ~~with public safety;~~

31 (7) ~~an updated victim impact statement or recommendation prepared~~
32 ~~under § 7-801 of this title;~~

1 ~~(8) any recommendation made by the sentencing judge at the time of~~
2 ~~sentencing;~~

3 ~~(9) any information that is presented to a commissioner at a meeting with~~
4 ~~the victim;~~

5 ~~(10) any testimony presented to the Commission by the victim or the victim's~~
6 ~~designated representative under § 7-801 of this title; and~~

7 ~~(11) compliance with the case plan developed under § 7-301.1 of this subtitle~~
8 ~~or § 3-601 of this article.~~

9 ~~§ 7-306.~~

10 ~~(a) (1) The chairperson of the Commission shall assign hearing examiners, or~~
11 ~~commissioners acting as hearing examiners, as required to hear cases for parole.~~

12 ~~(2) Each proceeding before a hearing examiner shall be conducted in~~
13 ~~accordance with this section.~~

14 ~~(b) The Commission shall keep a record of each hearing conducted by a hearing~~
15 ~~examiner.~~

16 ~~(c) A hearing examiner shall determine if an incarcerated individual is suitable~~
17 ~~for parole in accordance with the factors and other information specified in § 7-305 of this~~
18 ~~subtitle.~~

19 ~~(d) (1) At the conclusion of the hearing, the hearing examiner shall inform the~~
20 ~~incarcerated individual of the hearing examiner's recommendation for parole or denial of~~
21 ~~parole.~~

22 ~~(2) Within 21 days after the hearing, the hearing examiner shall give to~~
23 ~~the Commission, the Commissioner of Correction, and the incarcerated individual a written~~
24 ~~report of the hearing examiner's findings and recommendation for parole or denial of parole.~~

25 ~~(3) The Commissioner of Correction or the incarcerated individual may file~~
26 ~~with the Commission written exceptions to the report of a hearing examiner no later than~~
27 ~~5 days after the report is received.~~

28 ~~(e) (1) Subject to paragraph (2) of this subsection, one commissioner assigned~~
29 ~~by the chairperson of the Commission shall review summarily the recommendation of the~~
30 ~~hearing examiner.~~

31 ~~(2) (i) The Commission, on its own initiative or on the filing of an~~
32 ~~exception, may schedule a hearing on the record by the entire Commission or by a panel of~~
33 ~~at least two commissioners assigned by the chairperson of the Commission.~~

1 (ii) ~~The Commission or panel shall render a written decision on the~~
2 ~~appeal.~~

3 (iii) ~~The decision of the Commission or panel is final.~~

4 (3) ~~If an exception is not filed and the Commission does not act on its own~~
5 ~~initiative within the 5-day appeal period established under subsection (d)(3) of this section,~~
6 ~~the recommendation of the hearing examiner is approved.]~~

7 7-307.

8 (a) (1) Except as provided in subsection (c) of this section, the chairperson of
9 the Commission shall assign at least two commissioners to hear cases for parole release as
10 a panel.

11 (2) Each proceeding before a Commission panel shall be conducted in
12 accordance with this section.

13 (b) (1) (i) A Commission panel that consists of two commissioners shall
14 determine, by unanimous vote, whether the incarcerated individual is suitable for parole
15 in accordance with the factors and other information specified in § 7-305 of this subtitle.

16 (ii) If the two-commissioner panel is unable to reach a unanimous
17 decision, the chairperson of the Commission shall convene a three-commissioner panel as
18 soon as practicable to rehear the case.

19 (2) A Commission panel that consists of three commissioners shall
20 determine, by majority vote, whether the incarcerated individual is suitable for parole in
21 accordance with the factors and other information specified in § 7-305 of this subtitle.

22 (c) For an incarcerated individual who has been sentenced to life imprisonment
23 after being convicted of a crime committed on or after October 1, 2021, ~~at least six~~
24 ~~affirmative votes are~~ **THE AFFIRMATIVE VOTE OF A MAJORITY OF THE**
25 **COMMISSIONERS APPOINTED TO THE COMMISSION IS** required to approve the
26 incarcerated individual for parole, based on consideration of the factors specified in § 7-305
27 of this subtitle.

28 (d) (1) The Commission panel shall inform the incarcerated individual and the
29 appropriate correctional authority of the Commission's decision as soon as possible.

30 (2) If parole is denied, the Commission shall give the incarcerated
31 individual a written report of its findings within 30 days after the hearing.

32 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, ~~That it is the intent of the General~~
33 ~~Assembly that any funds budgeted for hearing examiner salaries as of the effective date of~~
34 ~~this Act be re-budgeted for parole commissioner salaries.~~

1 ~~SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED,~~ That this Act shall take effect
2 October 1, 2026.

Approved:

Governor.

Speaker of the House of Delegates.

President of the Senate.