

SUPPORT SB 817

Mr. Chairman and Honorable Members of the
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

My name is Vincent Greco and I am a retiring citizen after spending 34 years in the Maryland prison system for felony murder. I have also been on parole and probation for the past 5½ years. I do not wish to repeat the testimony and facts behind the concept of this Bill. I know they will be presented and most on this committee know them. Let me just share my experience.

I was sentenced as a primary in a very serious felony-murder case in 1981. When sentenced, the Judge informed me that I would be eligible for parole and a possible modification of my sentence if I became “rehabilitated and made such an example of myself that it would convince the parole board and Governor to parole me and/or convince him to modify my sentence.” I set out to do just that (as many of the “lifers did and have who are still caught up in this political process of parole”).

I entered prison as a psychologically disturbed young adult with only an 8th grade education. Within months, I was able to enter into intensive psychological treatment and continued with this for over a decade while it was available. I also attained a GED and a Bachelor’s degree within my first 8 years. I went on to attain a Master’s Degree from University of California (a degree signed by Governor Jerry Brown).

I also involved myself in many social work programs and community outreach initiatives. I became a facilitator in both the Alternatives to Violence project and other re-socialization programs. I assure you that there are many other Lifers who have achieved the same or similar accomplishments!

I went before the parole commission several times and, while told my achievements and even apparent rehabilitation was admirable, I would not be paroled and, due to the nature of my crime, I would probably never be paroled. Finally, after presenting my case to my sentencing judge— including the facts concerning parole, including that Governors in Maryland were saying “Life means Life,” and even if that changed I would not be a good candidate because I was the primary in a very serious crime, the Judge reduced my sentence to Life all but 50 years and I received a mandatory release in November 2014.

While Governors Ehrlich and Hogan have paroled several Lifers, it is far short of the number recommended by the Parole Commission and vetted by the Governors’ staff. It is imperative to depoliticize this antiquated aspect of the Criminal Justice system. Frankly, Ladies and Gentlemen, it could almost be equated to the Governor having the final answer in sentencing.

I implore you to give a favorable recommendation to this Bill and to also encourage your colleagues in the Senate to pass this Bill. Thank you.

Respectfully,
Vincent Greco,
Member, Executive Committee, Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform
Board Member, Out For Justice
Member, Maryland Prisoner’s Rights Committee
Citizen of Maryland