

Testimony in support of HB 323 (Maryland Second Look Act), February 4, 2020  
Dr. Linda Green (lindadgreen@gmail.com)  
Member, American Public Health Association  
Member, Life After Release

Dear Chairman Clippinger:

I live in Mt. Rainier and am a resident of Prince George's County since 1980. I have three children who have graduated from the public high schools. I have been a member of the American Public Health Association (APHA) for 40 years and practiced medicine in the county at Prince George's Hospital Center from 1996 until 2015. Since my retirement I have volunteered in a free clinic now located in Seat Pleasant and also volunteered with the Participatory Defense Committee of Life After Release which is located in Camp Springs.

Early on in my time in Prince George's County I was involved with Amnesty International and the campaigns for police accountability. The report *Driving While Black* was an early review of the arrests that led to incarceration for many residents. A more recent study was published in the *Journal of Urban Health* in 2015 entitled "Social Movements against Racist Police Brutality and Department of Justice Intervention in Prince George's County Maryland". This year the *American Journal of Public Health* issued the January 2020 Supplement: "Documenting and Addressing the Health Impacts of Carceral Systems". Taken together these documents support the idea that for many years young people and disproportionately minority residents have been imprisoned in situations where justice may not have been fairly or reasonably administered. It would seem only right that reevaluation of many cases be offered, especially for those imprisoned as juveniles when the death penalty was still on the books in Maryland.

In my volunteering at Life After Release I have attended several courtroom hearings and trials and watched a number of young people accept plea deals which essentially eliminate any rights to appeal of their cases. From my readings it seems that this is frequently the case in the US and in Maryland such that at least 90% of youth accept a plea deal rather than going to trial. Locking them up and throwing away the key for many years up to life imprisonment thus becomes routine. However in the past 4 months I have watched two trials in which young men were completely exonerated by juries of their peers after refusing plea deals. This has further strengthened my support for HB 323. The ability of residents convicted as minors to petition the court (E-1) seems particularly important. There has been an increased understanding that young people mature later than was originally considered when many were tried as an adult instead of as a juvenile. But all those serving long or lifetime sentences should be able to request a reevaluation given the long history of racism in the county.

The evolution of sentencing and criminal justice decision making has recently been well documented in several books and articles. The extent of incarceration of the population has been noted by many to be extreme and the result of failed policies such as the war on drugs. Efforts to reverse some of the over-sentencing of recent decades warrants support now. Thank you.

