

House Bill 985 Favorable
Fixing Maryland's Exoneree Compensation Law
Jermaine Arrington, *Montgomery County Exoneree*
House Judiciary Committee
February 26, 2020

My name is Jermaine Arrington and I spent 15 years in prison for a murder in Montgomery County that I didn't commit. Despite DNA proving my innocence, I am still not eligible for state compensation.

When I went to prison I was 19 years old and I wouldn't be free again until I was 34 years old. There are some things I'll never get back. I missed out on so much time with my family. I never got to say goodbye to loved ones who passed away while I was incarcerated. My dreams of joining the military were gone. I missed out on a critical time in life when most people are learning to become adults.

Even after a decade of freedom, I'm still struggling from the effects of my wrongful conviction. My wife helped me get back on my feet when I first got out, but it is still hard for my family to make ends meet. I've tried to make the best out of my circumstances. I became a certified youth practitioner. For the past three years I've been the manager of a program in Montgomery County that helps at-risk youth get diplomas and job skills.

If I hadn't been wrongfully incarcerated I would have been further along in my career. I've taken college courses but I don't have the money to finish my bachelor's degree. With a college diploma I would be able to do what I love on a bigger scale and help more young people. My wife and children would be more financially stable.

This legislation would give me a chance to be compensated for the years that were taken away from me. It would give me a shot at finally getting justice. I hope you will vote to improve Maryland's compensation law.