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FROM THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF CRIME PREVENTION, YOUTH, AND VICTIM SERVICES

Chair Clippinger, Vice-Chair Atterbeary, Members of the Committee
House Judiciary Committee
Room 101
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

March 3, 2020

House Bill 300: Inmates- Life Imprisonment- Parole Reform

Position: Oppose

Dear Chair Clippinger, Vice-Chair Atterbeary, and Members of the Committee:

The Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services is providing this letter of opposition towards House Bill 300 Inmates- Life Imprisonment- Parole Reform.

House Bill 300 makes alterations to the existing parole process in Maryland. Under current law, the Maryland Parole Commission has the power to authorize the parole of an inmate in Maryland. Following a recommendation by the Parole Commission, the Governor has the ability to approve or disapprove of the recommendation to grant parole.

An individual who is sentenced to a term of incarceration is entitled to a parole hearing after serving one-fourth of the term. However, if a person is serving a sentence for a third or subsequent felony drug crime, or for a crime of violence, the individual is not eligible for parole consideration until the person has served 15 years. If the individual is sentenced to life imprisonment for first degree murder, the person is not eligible for parole until the person has served 25 years.

House Bill 300 permits an individual who has served 30 years of a life sentence eligibility parole consideration. If the Parole Commission decides to grant parole to the individual who has served 30 years and the Secretary approves the decision, the person shall be paroled without the approval of the Governor.

Article II, Section 20 of the Maryland Constitution gives the Governor the power to grant reprieves and pardons for offenses against the state. House Bill 300 interferes with the Chief Executive's ability to carry out this power designated to the office. Violent offenders who are sentenced to life imprisonment would be able to be paroled without the approval of the Governor. Allowing the Governor to review the final recommendations of the Parole Commission is an important safeguard to releasing criminals who have been sentenced to life imprisonment.

For reasons stated above, the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services oppose House Bill 300.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "V. Glenn Fueston, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

V. Glenn Fueston, Jr.
Executive Director
Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services

For all inquiries, please contact
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