



February 1, 2021

SB202 - Support

Senator Will Smith
Chair, Judicial Proceedings
Miller Senate Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Support for Correctional Services – Parole – Life Imprisonment

Dear Chairman Smith and Committee Members:

As the State's Attorney for Baltimore City, I support Senate Bill 202 which seeks to eliminate the requirement that the parole of a person serving a parole-eligible life sentence in a state correctional facility or the Patuxent Institution be approved by the Governor.

I support and am advocating for parole reform. I am a firm believer that Maryland needs to depoliticize the parole process by removing the Governor from the equation and giving the final say on parole for individuals serving parole eligible life sentences with the Parole Commission. Currently, Maryland is only one of three states in the country that requires the Governor to personally approve parole for these individuals. The proposed legislation before you today is not aimed at the current administration, rather it is aimed at the parole process.

The Governor's current power to control the fate of a person's future, through parole rejection, significantly undermines recommendations made by the Parole Commission, ignores outcomes and low recidivism rates from those previously paroled or released under *Unger v. State*, and makes taxpayers responsible for the cost of excessively long stays of incarceration. More than 2,000 individuals are serving sentences of life with the possibility of parole, and nearly 300 whose offenses were committed at age 17 or younger.

Until the current administration, no parole recommendations made by the Parole Commission were approved by the previous four administrations. In 2011, the General Assembly did move to reform the parole process by requiring the Governor to act on Parole Commission decision within 180 days, however the administration at the time rejected the application of every case that came across the desk.

This legislation does not guarantee the release of any person. It simply makes it possible for people with parole eligible sentences to be released if the Parole Commission makes the decision to recommend them after extensive vetting – the way the system was designed to work.

For these reasons, I urge a favorable vote on Senate Bill 202.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Marilyn J. Mosby".

Marilyn J. Mosby
State's Attorney for Baltimore City