

Bill No: HB 0003
Title: Parole Reform
Committee: Judiciary/Judicial Proceedings
Hearing Date: 1/18/21
Position: I support this bill.

I believe that the Governor should not play a role in the parole process in Maryland. I urge a favorable report on this bill.

I support this bill because it would decrease the number of reformed individuals who remain incarcerated. Many have lived without their family members for years and have missed out on countless milestones and memories with loved ones because of the Governor's refusal to grant parole to many lifers who have been approved for parole by the Maryland Parole Commission, even when they have few, if any, infractions while incarcerated and have shown evidence of significant rehabilitation.

Maryland is one of only three states that includes the Governor in its decisions to grant parole. The politicization of the process for releasing rehabilitated incarcerated individuals has kept too many in prison longer than they deserve. The process gives the Governor far too much power in making these decisions; it leaves the Maryland Parole Commission essentially powerless. From Governor Glendening's declaration that "life means life" in 1994 to Governor Hogan's refusal to parole lifers approved by the Maryland Parole Commission today, denying parole to lifers has been based on the false and offensive narrative that these men and women cannot be rehabilitated. This is untrue and based on the releases already made through the Unger decision, we need change now.

I am a Maryland resident, taxpaying constituent of this Judicial Proceedings Committee. There are people I know who are stuck in this stagnant, unjust system. They do not deserve to die in prison, especially after being promised true and meaningful consideration at parole.

I strongly urge the passage of this parole reform bill.

Sincerely,

Laurie Bezold

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