



Maryland Restorative Justice Initiative
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House bill 742 Favorable February 10, 2021

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**Compensation to Individual Erroneously Convicted, Sentenced, and Confined
(The Walter Lomax Act)**

Chairman Clippinger and members of the **Judiciary Committee**

First, I am honored, and humbled that this bill has been named ‘The Walter Lomax Act.’

I am very fortunate to be here. Last year when I was scheduled to testify on this important piece of legislation, many of you know that I suffered a serious heart attack and stroke just before the hearing.

Were it not for Frederick County Sheriff Chuck Jenkins and Maryland State Police Trooper First Class Luke Rafer who performed CPR on me until an emergency medical services team arrived, I would not be alive today, the two men “literally saved my life.

President Ferguson said when he visited me in the hospital that I insisted to him, “You just really got to pass this bill.” Of course I was functioning automatically, because it was something I had almost given my life for, but the reality is this bill must pass. It’s the correct thing to do in addressing a horrible tragedy, **erroneously Convicted, Sentenced, and Confined for something you did not do.**

The Maryland Restorative Justice Initiative supports **House Bill 742**, as do I.

As the director of MRJI, and a member of the Task Force that studied this issue the need to pass this legislation is still urgent. The Task Force did an excellent evaluation of the compensation procedure, and provided excellent guidance to compensate Erroneously Convicted individuals, but the legislation did not pass.

The Board of Public Works did develop a method to compensate five individuals last year, I was one of those individuals. However, I was released in 2006, completely exonerated in 2014, yet only began being compensated in 2019. It should not have taken that long to correct a miscarriage of justice, this is why passage of HB-742 is so important.

Each individual experience trauma differently, so it is difficult to fathom what they are dealing with, that is unless you have had a similar experience. You will never be able to make them whole again, because they will never be the same, the best you can hope is that they learn to live with what has happened to them.

What this body can do is pass this legislation so that those individuals who has been **erroneously Convicted, can be compensated in a timely manner.**

I therefore encourage you to vote Favorable for House Bill 742

Sincerely,

Walter Lomax, Executive Director

Maryland Restorative Justice Initiative

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