

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF BILL SB0774

Correctional Services – Medical Parole – Life Imprisonment

Date: 03/08/2022

From: Maryland Prisoners' Rights Coalition

To: Chair William C. Smith, Jr., Vice Chair Jeff Waldstreicher, and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Re: SUPPORT FOR BILL SB0774

The Maryland Prisoner's Rights Coalition is a directly impacted governed organization supported by advocacy partners that work to improve conditions of confinement for incarcerated individuals in Maryland Prisons.

In 2008, the Maryland General Assembly established a process for medical parole for incarcerated persons incapacitated by medical conditions such that they no longer pose any danger to public safety. In 2017, the Governor was given an opportunity to disapprove of any decision granting parole. In 2021, this legislative body removed the Governor from the parole process. However, as the law currently reads, the Governor still could disapprove of the opportunity for medical parole.

This bill is a technical correction to, SB0202, the 2021 bill removing the Governor from the parole process. The General Assembly's motivation for the 2021 bill was to entirely remove the Governor from the parole process, and no indication that medical parole was meant to remain open to disapproval from the Governor; therefore, this bill completes that task started by the 2021 law.

Further, as an organization that advocates for better access to healthcare for incarcerated persons, we oppose any further restriction on those who are eligible for medical parole in Maryland. The already difficult process in applying for and gaining medical parole, the virtually non-existent risk of recidivism, and the dire conditions of confinement under these circumstances, are even more compelling factors for those incapacitated to qualify for medical parole.

Therefore, we support the passage of SB0074 to fully remove the Governor from the medical parole process.

Respectfully,
The Maryland Prisoners' Right Coalition
