

**February 2, 2023**

**Honorable Senator William C. Smith Jr.**

**Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**Miller Senate Office Building, 2 East**

**Annapolis, MD 21401**

**Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of SB27 – Criminal Procedure - Restorative Justice Program**

Dear Chair William C. Smith Jr. and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee Members:

On behalf of the Maryland's Prisoners Rights Coalition, I thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 27 Criminal Procedure - Restorative Justice Program, sponsored by Senator Chris West.

Restorative justice (RJ) and victim-offender dialogue (VOD) are crucial in reducing crime and empowering victims because they adopt a different approach to crime that promotes healing and repair. This strategy seeks to bring the victim and the offender together to address the harm caused by the crime, which can help the victim feel heard and validated and the criminal accept responsibility for their actions.

Restorative justice aims to evaluate the negative impact of a crime and then identify what may be done to repair that harm while holding the offender accountable for his or her actions. Taking responsibility for the offender entails accepting blame and attempting to rectify the damage done.

According to research, RJ and VOD can result in better levels of satisfaction for both the victim and the offender. RJ may offer victims with a feeling of closure and justice, which can help to heal the trauma caused by the crime. RJ may give an opportunity for offenders to accept responsibility for their acts, which can lessen their likelihood of reoffending.

In terms of recidivism rates, research has indicated that participation in RJ programs can reduce the likelihood of reoffending. A study in New Zealand, for example, discovered that only 4% of RJ program participants reoffended after two years, compared to a national average of 25%. Another research conducted in the United States discovered that RJ programs reduced the chance of recidivism by 29%.

In conclusion, it has been demonstrated that post-conviction RJ and VOD are effective in reducing crime and empowering victims. They adopt a different approach to crime, focusing on healing and restoration, which can lead to better levels of satisfaction for both the victim and the offender. Furthermore, participation in RJ programs has been demonstrated to minimize the chance of reoffending, making RJ and VOD valuable instruments in the battle against crime.

For these reasons we ask for a favorable report SB27

Sincerely, Zenab Camara