



PREPARE
PREpare for PARole and REentry

February 21, 2023

Re: Testimony in Support of HB0715
Correctional Services - Violent Crime - Parole

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee:

I am a registered voter and returning citizen residing in District #41. I served over four decades for crimes I committed as a fifteen year old. I believe I deserved to be imprisoned and continue to spend every day atoning for my transgressions by working to improve myself and helping others. As a parole advocate for PREPARE, a non-profit providing parole and reentry services for Marylanders, I oppose legislation enhancing current parole eligibility for prisoners serving life terms.

As it stands now, a prisoner sentenced to life after October 1, 2021 has to serve twenty years (proceedings under 6-218 Criminal Procedure Articles) or twenty five years (proceedings under 2-303 or 2-304 Criminal Law Article) less earned diminution credit. The legislature removed the Governor from the parole equation and raised parole eligibility from fifteen years less earned diminution credit. This change in a parole policy which had existed for well over fifty years came after exhaustive research, negotiation, and countless Bills. As it was a recent effort to make the parole process more equitable for a disadvantaged segment of the prison population, I believe it is too soon to revisit the matter.

Secondly, in the early 70's the legislature believed that the ability of prisoners serving parole eligible life terms to earn diminution credit towards earlier parole consideration would motivate positive adjustment. Enacting legislation allowing lifers to earn such diminution credits transformed the prison system. The so-called worse prisoners conformed to institutional rules and pursued rehabilitative activities awarding diminution credits. In addition the prison environment becoming safer for residents and staff, lifers became better suited for release.

So, what could possibly be gained today by not allowing lifers to earn diminution credit? While earned diminution credit may allow for a lifer to be considered for parole up to five years earlier, parole in the case of a lifer is rarely granted so soon. Enhanced punishments have proven not to decrease crime. Additionally, removing the only

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PO Box 16274, Baltimore, MD 21210



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legislated incentive such violent prisoners have for good behavior would result in a more hostile environment for prisoners and staff.

I cannot in good conscience support this Bill for the reasons stated above. Thus, I ask this Committee not to vote favorably for HB0416.

Truly yours,

Gordon R. Pack, Jr.
gordon@prepare-parole.org
gordonrpack@gmail.com
Cell# 410-456-7034

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PO Box 16274, Baltimore, MD 21210