



**NATASHA DARTIGUE**  
PUBLIC DEFENDER

**KEITH LOTRIDGE**  
DEPUTY PUBLIC DEFENDER

**MELISSA ROTHSTEIN**  
CHIEF OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

**ELIZABETH HILLIARD**  
ACTING DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

### **POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION**

**BILL: SB132 – Correctional Services – Medical Parole – Life Imprisonment**

**FROM: Maryland Office of the Public Defender**

**POSITION: Favorable**

**DATE: 02/06/2024**

The Maryland Office of the Public Defender respectfully requests that the Committee issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 132.

Three years ago, the General Assembly voted to remove the Governor from parole for people serving life sentences (SB 202). The Governor vetoed this bill, but that veto was overridden during the 2021 Special Session. This was a critical step towards improving Maryland's broken parole system. We are incredibly grateful to all who worked to ensure the passage of this important legislation, which helps depoliticize parole.

The bill's intent was to remove the Governor from all life imprisonment cases. However, the section of the code pertaining to medical parole was inadvertently omitted from the bill draft. Unfortunately, this left an unintentional loophole: only medical parole cases still require gubernatorial action.

The only thing Senate Bill 132 does is correct this error by striking the lines of text in what is now subsection 7-309(i)(1)-(3), which currently require the Governor to approve medical parole for people serving life sentences. It does not make any other change.

This fix is particularly important due to the need for medical parole applications to be evaluated expeditiously. Medical parole is often sought by persons experiencing rapidly deteriorating, fatal medical conditions. Thus, the need for the Parole Commission to be able to act with immediacy is arguably most critical in these circumstances.

**For these reasons, the Maryland Office of the Public Defender urges this Committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 132.**

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**Submitted by: Maryland Office of the Public Defender, Government Relations Division.**

**Authored by: Elise Desiderio, Assistant Public Defender II, Appellate Division;**  
[elise.desiderio@maryland.gov](mailto:elise.desiderio@maryland.gov)