



PREPARE
PREpare for PARole and REentry

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**SB0026 OPPOSITION - Criminal Law - Manslaughter by Vehicle or Vessel -
Increased Penalties (Jamari's Law)**

In 2001, the term mass incarceration was coined to draw attention to the remarkable growth of prison populations. Since then, there has been a surge of research and examination into the consequences of mass incarceration on communities, families, and those who are incarcerated. These studies aim to determine whether the rising rates of incarceration truly contribute to safer communities and if they effectively prevent or discourage crime. Additionally, they shed light on the critical fact that individuals who have been previously incarcerated face limited prospects for earning a fair income and finding employment, as well as experiencing instability in housing and food security. Moreover, they are burdened with poor credit and mounting debt, while also facing increased risks of physical and mental health issues.

Manslaughter by Vehicle or Vessel, a non-violent crime without premeditated intent to cause harm, is inherently an accident. As someone who has personally experienced this charge and sentence as a returning citizen, I am deeply concerned about the financial burden it places on the State and the negative impact that increasing the sentence for first-time offenders would have on our communities. By definition, individuals charged with this offense will eventually reintegrate into our communities. Therefore, our focus should not be on increasing incarceration, but rather on supporting returning citizens to become successful members of society. Safer communities are built when we provide opportunities for accountability that reduce recidivism and allow individuals to make amends and contribute positively. Being responsible for a tragedy that affects families is a deeply traumatic experience in itself. While incarceration may be necessary in most cases, it is also deeply traumatizing and has long-lasting effects. Healing comes through acceptance, forgiveness, and support from self and others. It is a complex and individual process that varies from person to person, family to family, and community to community.

As the Director of Reentry for an advocacy and support organization, I have had the opportunity to give back to my community, my family, and others who have had similar experiences. A longer incarceration would not have paved the way for a successful reentry for me. It would have only prolonged the healing process, removed my contribution to my family and community, all in the name of punishment without considering rehabilitation. My responsibility and actions are unquestionable, and my dedication to helping others is a top priority. I am held accountable through various systems of parole, probation, and the Maryland Division of Motor Vehicles. The State already has sufficient guidelines in place to hold first-time and repeat offenders accountable for their actions. There is already a robust system of checks and balances.

Increasing the sentence for first-time offenses from 10-20 years will not reduce the likelihood of accidents or create more stable families and safer communities, which should be our ultimate goal.