

BILL NO: Senate Bill 1098
TITLE: Correctional Services-Diminution Credits - Sexual Offenses
COMMITTEE: Judicial Proceedings
HEARING DATE: February 27, 2024
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

Senate Bill 1098 will prohibit a person convicted of a first-degree rape and a first-degree sex offense from being entitled to diminution of the incarcerated individual's term of confinement. An incarcerated person convicted of these crimes will still be eligible for release by the Parole Commission. This bill will end the mandatory release of people convicted of these violent sex offense.

The bill is named for Pava Marie LePere, age 26, who was brutally murdered on September 22, 2023. Ms. Lepere was a tech entrepreneur who was named to Forbes' 30 under 30 list for social impact in 2023. Jason Billingsley, the suspect in her murder, had been released from prison in October of 2022. He was convicted of first-degree sex offense and received a sentence of 30 years with all but 14 years suspended. He was denied parole twice but released in October of 2022 after earning good time credits that effectively shortened his sentence.

The Women's Law Center supports Senate Bill 1098. In a report from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, which tracked released sex offenders from 2005-2014, the data revealed that released sex offenders were more than three times likely as other released prisoners to be arrested for rape or sexual assault. This legislation will end the mandatory release of incarcerated people serving sentences for these specific violent sex offenses. These specific offenders will only be released when the parole commission has had an opportunity to hear from all relevant persons involved the specific case.

For these reasons the Women's Law Center of Maryland strongly urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 1098.

The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a non-profit legal services organization whose mission is to ensure the physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy of women in Maryland. Our mission is advanced through direct legal services, information and referral hotlines, and statewide advocacy.