



## Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

### Testimony in Support of HB 118: Correctional Services - Geriatric and Medical Parole

TO: Delegate Luke Clippinger, Chair and Members of the House Judiciary Committee  
FROM: Karen “Candy” Clark, Criminal Justice Lead Advocate,  
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland  
DATE: February 27, 2024

The state- wide Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland asks for a favorable vote for **HB 118- Correctional Services - Geriatric and Medical Parole**. This bill upholds one of our basic faith principles; to honor the inherent dignity and worth of every person.

Our prison systems’ purpose is twofold:

1. to ensure a safe environment in which our communities can function and thrive and
2. to remove people who are illegally disrupting this environment and/or are a threat to others

This does not characterize most of our elderly prison population. Most of whom are over 60 years old and have served lengthy prison sentences that have extended their stay well beyond the age range in which they are likely to commit crimes.

In Maryland’s famous Unger case , where the average age of the released prisoner was 64, the recidivism rate was only 3% –compared to 40% for younger offenders– after 3 years on the outside. Upon release our elderly are still in the correctional system under the management of parole. Since they are no longer a dangerous threat, our faith calls for a compassionate release process for these geriatric citizens.

In 2022, The Justice Policy Institute (JPI) published a policy brief evaluating our Geriatric and Medical Parole Process. Many of the noted faults in this brief are addressed in this bill. For example, currently there is no in-person medical evaluation required to determine the state of a persons’ health status. It’s done by a professional response to medical records which has resulted in some tragic stories. HB 118 requires that medical examinations must be done in-person if they are requested.

This bill calls for changes that align with the concerns in the JPI policy brief. The result is a more efficient, accountable and humane process.

The Unitarian Universalists Legislative Ministry of Maryland asks for your support.

Respectfully submitted,

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