



February 13, 2024

Honorable Chair Luke Clippinger  
House Judiciary Committee  
House Office Building, Room 121  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of HB0724 Criminal Procedure - Petition to Reduce Sentence (Second Look Act)**

Dear Chair Clippinger and House Judiciary Committee Members:

On behalf of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, I thank you for this opportunity to testify in strong support of House Bill 724 Criminal Procedure - Petition to Reduce Sentence or the Second Look Act. CAIR is America's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization.

We strongly support this bill because it would create a meaningful opportunity to carve out a pathway towards release for incarcerated individuals who have demonstrated their rehabilitation.

According to the Vera Institute of Justice, since 1970, the total jail population in Maryland has increased by over 258 percent.<sup>1</sup> Since 1983, the prison population has increased nearly 45 percent. According to the Prison Policy Initiative, Maryland has an incarceration rate of **531 per 100,000 people**, including prisons, jails, immigration detention, and juvenile justice facilities.<sup>2</sup> We lock people up at a higher rate than almost any state or democratic country on earth. Baltimore City alone is home to only 9 percent of the state's residents, but is home to 40 percent of the state's incarcerated population.<sup>3</sup>

In Maryland, African Americans make up about 31 percent of state population, but 52 percent of people in jail and 69 percent of people in prison.<sup>4</sup> In order to address these racial disparities and the harmful consequences of mass incarceration, it's crucial that we examine mechanisms to substantially reduce the number of people who are incarcerated in our state.

Addressing the harms of mass incarceration requires a multifaceted approach that involves sentencing reform and opportunities for sentence reduction. One way to do that is to pass the Second Look Act. Individuals serving lengthy sentences, having completed at least twenty years, would be granted the chance to petition the court for sentence modification or reduction, contingent on demonstrated rehabilitation. This proposal incentivizes good behavior and acknowledges the transformative power of prioritizing rehabilitation and the imperative of tackling racial justice issues within our criminal justice system.

The Prison Policy Initiative has conducted research on the cost-effectiveness of earned time credits. Their analysis found that offering sentence reduction for good behavior and program participation can also lead to significant cost savings for correctional systems by reducing the length of time inmates spend in prison and lowering recidivism rates.

As a civil rights organization dedicated to criminal justice reform and ending mass incarceration, CAIR believes everyone deserves a second chance in most cases. I respectfully urge you to give a favorable report for House Bill 724.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

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1. <https://www.vera.org/downloads/pdfdownloads/state-incarceration-trends-maryland.pdf>
2. <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/MD.html>
3. <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/MD.html>
4. <https://www.vera.org/downloads/pdfdownloads/state-incarceration-trends-maryland.pdf>