



TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

HB 185 – Correctional Services – Medical Parole – Life Imprisonment

POSITION: Favorable

BY: Linda Kohn, President

Date: February 27, 2024

The League of Women Voters of Maryland supports HB 185, which would repeal a provision of current law that permits the Governor to override a decision of the Maryland Parole Commission to grant medical parole to an inmate serving a life sentence. The League of Women Voters of Maryland supports a prison system that adopts, monitors and enforces standards which provide a humane physical and psychological setting. Maryland law recognizes that in some situations the prison system is not a humane setting for an inmate with a severe physical or mental disability.

The existing law requires the Parole Commission to find that the individual “is so chronically debilitated or incapacitated by a medical or mental health condition, disease, or syndrome as to be physically incapable of presenting a danger to society” and must rely on expert medical advice to make this determination. The provision allowing the Governor to override the Commission’s decision opens the door to political considerations that may be inconsistent with the criteria set forth in the law. Although a rejection of the Commission’s decision might be politically popular in some cases, that would undermine the application of the principles set forth in the law that guard against inhumane conditions of imprisonment.

We urge a favorable report on HB 185.