

**TESTIMONY ON HB 724  
MARYLAND SECOND LOOK ACT**

**House Judiciary Committee  
February 13, 2024**

**SUPPORT**

Submitted by: **Magdalena Tsiongas**

Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett and members of the Judiciary Committee:

**I, Magdalena Tsiongas, am testifying in support of HB 724, the Maryland Second Look Act.** I am submitting this testimony as the convenor of the Maryland Second Look Coalition and the family member of an incarcerated person.

I started convening the Maryland Second Look Coalition with other impacted family members, previously incarcerated people and advocates to create a pathway for hope and reunification for families. Passage of the Maryland Second Look Act would create a meaningful opportunity for sentence modification for incarcerated people after having served 20 years of their sentence. I firmly believe that those individuals who are able to demonstrate their growth and rehabilitation, such that they are no longer a threat to public safety, should have the opportunity for release. After 20 years of incarceration, my own family member, John, will have been in prison longer than he was free, the equivalent of his entire lifetime before prison, behind bars. A lifetime is enough to be a different person. It is the difference between a teenager and a 40 year old.

While watching someone you love dream of a life you don't know if they will ever reach is painful, seeing their growth is amazing. During his 17 years of incarceration, I have seen the leadership in John that drives him to support others in rehabilitation. Being given the opportunity to get therapy while behind bars has given him a chance to finally unpack the first 19 years of his life, where he often experienced things no child should have to experience, that contributed to his incarceration. It's also allowed him to address the harm that he has caused and to gain the wisdom to know where he wants to go. Our dream is to have our family whole.

A second look through HB 724 is not a guarantee for anyone to come home, but it is hope. Hope that a judge will see what decades worth of growth has amounted to and grant some the opportunity to finally come home and bring that hard work to the community with them.

I know many more men and women serving decades-long sentences who have worked hard, hoping for their chance to reenter and succeed in their communities, and finally get the chance to fully be sons, daughters, parents, spouses and siblings to their families again. Nothing has brought me more joy in this fight than seeing other coalition members who have come home after decades in prison, now reunited with their wives, children and parents.

For these reasons, I encourage you to vote **favorably** on the **Maryland Second Look Act HB 724**.

Thank you.