



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 0181

Correctional Services – Geriatric and Medical Parole

Judicial Proceedings

FAVORABLE

TO: Senator William C. Smith, Chair. Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Rev. Kenneth Phelps, Jr., Maryland Episcopal Public Policy Network

DATE: January 27, 2025

In 2015 (2015-A011) and again in 2018 (2018-D004), the Episcopal Church adopted resolutions calling for comprehensive reforms on both the state and federal level aimed at reducing mass incarceration practices, disparities in sentencing, the elimination of solitary confinement and the humane treatment of prisoners.

Senate Bill 181/House Bill 190 would require the Maryland Parole Commission to consider a person's age when determining whether to grant or deny parole. Geriatric parole would apply to individuals who are at least 60 years old, have served at least 15 years of the sentence imposed, and are serving a parole-eligible sentence. These people have long ago aged out of crime, and they are almost invariably very different people than they were when they committed their crimes.

Now is the time for Maryland to treat individuals who are aging and dying behind our prison walls more humanely. This bill broadens who can request medical parole for an individual and outlines the required documentation, assessment, and decision-making process.

The Diocese of Maryland requests a Favorable report