



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Testimony in Support of SB 181: Correctional Services - Geriatric and Medical Parole

TO: Senator Will Smith, Jr. Chair and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Karen "Candy" Clark,
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland Criminal Justice Lead
DATE: January 28, 2024

The state-wide Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland asks for a favorable vote for **SB 181- Correctional Services - Geriatric and Medical Parole**. This bill upholds our basic values of justice and equity.

Our prison systems' purpose is to ensure a safe environment in which our communities can function and thrive by separating people who are illegally disrupting this environment and/or are a threat to others. This does not characterize the prison population who would be eligible for this parole—the elderly and the infirm.

Most of the elderly population of our prison 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 fact, 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.

The Medical Portion of this Bill enhances last year's bill by providing more clarity and detailed procedures for those who care for medically-challenged persons, including:

- Defining the conditions that would meet a "Chronically debilitated or incapacitated" condition, including those with a terminal illness. For example: If the condition prevents them from completing one normal daily activity, (like dressing, breathing, going to the toilet, etc.)
- Altering how the parole commission evaluates a request for medical parole. Who and where it can be performed, and what to do if the condition is no longer present.
- Providing 5 different ways to clarify who can request the evaluation and where it can be completed.
- It also offers the option for the Governor to be involved and would allow him to approve or disapprove the medical parole.

The bill continues to thoroughly cover all aspects of the issues that occur with this condition and situation, it also requires specific data to be recorded for annual evaluation and record-keeping. It

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displaces intense care and compassion about how everyone with special needs should be treated.

Upon release, the patients 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 them. This is why the Unitarian Universalists Legislative Ministry of Maryland respectfully asks for your support.

Respectfully submitted,

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