



*Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes*

**Testimony for Senate Bill 291**

**Criminal Procedure – Petition to Reduce Sentence  
(Maryland Second Look Act)**

TO: Hon. William C. Smith, Jr, Chair, and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Job Opportunities Task Force

DATE: January 30, 2024

POSITION: Support

The Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) is an independent, nonprofit organization that develops and advocates policies and programs to increase the skills, job opportunities, and incomes of low-wage workers and job seekers in Maryland. **JOTF supports Senate Bill 291, which would allow certain individuals who have served twenty years of their sentence to petition the court for a reduction of sentence.**

The state prison population and expenses may be reduced via sentence reductions for incarcerated people with lowest-risk status. Successful applicants for SB 291 sentence modifications would be very low risk in light of their age, deteriorating health, and demonstrated self-rehabilitation achievements. Cost savings are especially likely because costs increase dramatically for older individuals in prison. Wasteful and unnecessary policies and practices—such as the ongoing incarceration of people who pose the lowest risk of reoffending—harm public safety by siphoning massive sums of money that could otherwise support programs that actually prevent crime. The cost savings that are likely to result from the passage of SB 291 would allow the reallocation of critical funds to assist with drug treatment, reentry and other rehabilitation programs for people at higher risk of engaging in criminal behavior.

This bill also has serious racial justice implications, given that 80% of the 2,212 people serving life sentences in MD are Black; a huge disparity compared to the 31% of Black Marylanders in the general population.

Maryland spends approximately \$60,000 annually per incarcerated person. That does not include the amount of money the state loses for every individual that is not gainfully employed due to their incarceration, which limits the state's collectible revenues. Given the research that suggests these prison populations are less likely to reoffend, SB 291 is a sensible bill that lessens state expenditures without compromising public safety.

**For these reasons, JOTF supports Senate Bill 291 and urges a favorable report.**

**For more information, contact:**

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