

January 30, 2025 @ 1:00pm (Senate Hearing)

Maryland General Assembly
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SB 291 – Criminal Procedure – Petition to Reduce Sentence (Md Second Look Act)
SUPPORT

Please accept my written testimony in support of Senate Bill 291. I am testifying on behalf of the Family Support Network (FSN) and from my personal experience.

FSN is a network of individuals with incarcerated loved ones, returning citizens and advocates that support one another and serve as a voice for those behind the wall. I have the lived experience and remain near to those that are dealing with the daily challenges of having an incarcerated loved one. Most of the FSN returning citizens and those still serving are lifers or have life equivalent sentences.

My husband was incarcerated at 16 years of age and served 28 years and 8 months in Maryland prisons. In 1993, he was sentenced to two consecutive life sentences plus 23 years. Given his sentence he was not eligible for his first parole hearing until he had served 40 years at which time, he would have been 56 years of age. With all his post-conviction options exhausted and parole out of sight. We thought all was lost. However, after retaining private counsel in March 2017, a Motion to Correct an Illegal Sentence was filed and through that motion it was discovered that there was illegality in his sentence. Subsequently, his original sentence was modified to correct the illegality and through that action he was able to file a second Motion for Reconsideration. His initial Motion for Reconsideration was denied in 1999. After 25+ years of incarceration, the second Motion for Reconsideration was granted and a hearing was scheduled. My husband was not the lost 16-year-old teenager that was engulfed in a situation where he found himself at the wrong place, at the wrong time, with the wrong people. He was now a man in his mid-forties that had matured, committed himself to being a better person, engaged in developmental opportunities whenever possible and ultimately was no threat to public safety. His impeccable institutional record and demonstration of growth garnered the State's support and recommendation of release. On November 8, 2021, his sentence was reduced to time served and by the grace of God he became a free man on November 9, 2021. Since his release he maintains full employment, supports our family, and makes positive contributions to strengthening our community. None of this would have been possible without a Second Look, we both know how fortunate he is and that his case is an exception and not the rule. The one thing that he expresses that lingers over his mind the most is that he left behind so many deserving men that are just like him. He says those men are trapped in a system that has forgotten about them and has left them for dead. He proclaims often that he is not special and that the same "Second Look" that God blessed him with should be bestowed upon others.

Maryland incarcerates the highest percentage of Black people in the country (71% of Md's prison population is Black – 2x the national average). Maryland leads the nation in its level of incarcerated black men ages 18 to 24 by sentencing young Black men to the longest prison terms at a rate 25% higher than the next nearest state (Mississippi). How did this happen? Bias and discrimination against Black and Brown people with low income has been well documented at every stage in Maryland's criminal legal system, to arresting and sentencing. It is my desire that you consider the legislation before you as a step in the right direction of fixing the systemic mass

incarceration of Black and Brown men in Maryland. The extreme level of incarceration did not occur overnight by one specific action. It took years and incremental actions that had negative affects throughout the legal system to get here. To undo the injustices and address this crisis it is also going to take several actions over a period of years to achieve real justice reform. In 2021, the Juvenile Restoration Act (JRA) was passed but, it ended on the day it was signed as it was retrospective legislation. I implore you to build upon that to ensure we give those most deserving of a second look an opportunity to do so after having served 20 years in prison regardless of their age at the time of the offense.

We have been in communication with those behind the wall so they may also exercise their voices and participate in this legislative process. Please read their stories, lament the amount of time they have served and acknowledge that redemption is possible. Second chances are needed and necessary.

On behalf of myself, FSN and the Md Second Look Coalition I hope that you will unequivocally support this bill and move it forward with a **favorable** vote.

Respectfully,

Martina Hazelton

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To: House and Senate Judiciary Proceedings Committee
Favorable Support

Fr: Deirdre Nichole Rose, #162-393/0307498
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I am writing to express my personal connection as to why the MD Second Look Act should be passed. I am 67 years old, transgendered and an Honorably Discharged Navy veteran. I joined the military at age 17 and was released from Active Duty October 28, 1980.

I was incarcerated March 28, 1981 at the age of 23. I have served over 43 years, day for day, since this date. Having never been incarcerated before, survival was extremely difficult for me, in addition to being addicted to drugs and alcohol.

I began my incarceration at the Maryland Penitentiary, 954 Forrest St. in Baltimore. I was on Protective Custody (P.C.) for 3 years before being forced to move into population. I worked as a Teacher's Aide/Tutor for GED students on P.C.

Once in population I began to rehabilitate myself through Psychological Therapy and working

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to assist others as a Teacher's Aide/Tutor in the Vocational Drafting/Woodshop program. As well as attending and participating in A.A., Jaycees, Concerned Veterans 954, and the Coppin State College Extension Program, eventually earning a Bachelor's Degree in Business Management with a 3.699 G.P.A. and Alpha Kappa Mu Honor. As well as eventually working for M.C.E. Graphics as a Mechanic.

It took me 15 years to become totally sober and defeat my Substance Abuse problem. I was transferred to R.C.I. in 1993 and then to M.C.I.H. in 1996. At M.C.I.H. I began training as an A.V.P. Facilitator, becoming Certified in 1999 and working with Community Correctional Services Comm. as well as lifestyles and Jaycees, while continuing to assist others as a Teacher's Aide/Tutor in the school program. It was in 2001, when I found my Spiritual Path at M.C.I.H. - Native American/Wicca.

Transferred to Jessup - Maryland House of Corr. in 2003, I again worked for S.V.I./M.C.E., learning to sew in the Uniform Shop. Continuing to serve others as an A.V.P. Facilitator, Veterans group and attending A.A. and Native American services. Sent to W.C.I. - Cumberland in 2007 and back to M.C.T.C. Hagerstown in 2008.

I continued to serve Veterans Group and A.V.P. as a Facilitator. Transferred back to J.C.I. in 2009 again working in the Uniform Shop for S.V.I./M.C.E., attending Native American and A.V.P. Again sent back to Hagerstown, M.C.T.C. then M.C.I.H. (again) serving as A.V.P. Facilitator and Veteran's group Board member. Continuing to work at M.C.E. as a Clerk and welder in Metal II, as well as eventually volunteering for America's Vet Dog program, training Service Dogs.

In 2014 transferred to E.C.I. and working for M.C.E., Veterans and A.V.P., as a welder in the Furniture Repair Shop. Once again coming back to R.C.I. in 2019 I came out as Transgender and received H.R.T. Working as Catalog Clerk for H.V.#1 (3 years), as A.V.P. Facilitator and in the Veteran's Group.

August 23, 2023 I was diagnosed with H.P.V. Throat Cancer and treated with Radiation and Chemotherapy at John's Hopkins Hospital beginning Feb. 2, 2024. I am still recovering from this as well as being hospitalized in July 2024, for a near fatal Blood Clot in my lungs.

I was treated at Meritus Medical Center, spending 5 days in I.C.U. (10 days total) and have been recovering since then.

I feel that I have proven that I deserve a chance to be released from Prison and be able to serve the Community at large. I have resolved my problems and overcome my faults. I have continuously given Service to others and find that this helps me to be peaceful and calm as well as Spiritually centered.

I am currently serving as High Priest/Facilitator for the Wicca group, and helping to get A.V.P. back up and functioning after CV-19 restrictions. I am also helping the Veterans group and remain in Psychological Counseling.

Many family members have passed away, including my mother, father, brother, sister and my youngest son. My two remaining children (1 daughter, 1 son) are a part of my life as well as my grandchildren.

I pray you will give this testimony to the Committee and help US get a Second Chance to be of service to others. There are many others like myself, who deserve this. Our experiences are valuable to others who need help. I would like to continue my service to others when released and become a counselor.

Very Sincerely

Deirdre N. Rose