



TESTIMONY FOR SB0181 Geriatric and Medical Parole

Bill Sponsor: Senator Hettleman

Committee: Judicial Proceedings

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Aileen Alex, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0181 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

SB0181 would reform the parole process by implementing geriatric and medical parole considerations for incarcerated individuals who are elderly or chronically ill. HB0181 mandates that individuals aged 60 or older who have served at least 15 years of their sentence and are not on the sex offender registry are eligible for geriatric parole. Furthermore, HB0181 defines terminal illness and broadens the criteria for "chronically debilitated or incapacitated" individuals eligible for medical parole to encompass diagnosable medical conditions that are unlikely to improve and hinder the individual from completing more than one daily living activity.

Despite this expansion, SB0181 introduces robust measures to ensure the program's success. Recipients of geriatric parole must undergo a parole hearing every two years, during which the Parole Commission must evaluate the impact of the individual's age on their recidivism risk. For medical parole, the Commission is required to consider detailed medical information and evaluations in their review process, thereby limiting eligibility to those genuinely in need.

Reducing sentences for elderly and infirmed inmates who have already served substantial time for their offenses is a humane action, particularly in Maryland, which has one of the highest minority incarceration rates in the country. Such reductions will save Maryland taxpayers more than \$35,000 per inmate annually—the average cost of incarcerating a healthy inmate—thereby helping to offset the cost of this compassionate program.

The Maryland Legislative Coalition steadfastly supports this bill and similar initiatives that prudently reduce the prison population without compromising public safety. We firmly recommend a FAVORABLE report in committee.