

TESTIMONY ON SB291 MARYLAND SECOND LOOK ACT

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
January 30, 2025

FAVORABLE

Submitted by: John Spillane

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher and members of the
Judicial Proceedings Committee:

I'm John Spillane and I am testifying in support of SB291, the Maryland Second Look Act. I'm submitting this testimony as a community member in District 22, in Prince George's County.

Passage of the Maryland Second Look Act will create meaningful opportunities for sentence modification for those incarcerated people who, after having served 20 years of their sentence, are able to demonstrate their growth and rehabilitation. If they show that they are no longer a threat to public safety, I believe they should have the opportunity for release.

Given the tendency for people to age out of crime and the very low recidivism rate for other individuals released from decades-long sentences, this decision is unlikely to

negatively impact public safety. We know many men and women serving decades-long sentences who have worked hard, hoping for their chance to reenter and succeed in their communities.

Currently, incarcerated people in Maryland can only petition the Court for modification within 90 days of sentencing; that severely limits any potential sentence modifications. Maryland judges used to have the ability to review sentences, an important safety valve for extreme sentences, but this opportunity was eliminated with a rule change in 2004. Furthermore for more than 25 years, Maryland's parole system was not available to people serving life with parole sentences.

We need to remedy decades of wrongful denials which contributed to the bloated prison system and its extreme racial disparities: 2,212 people serving life sentences in MD, 80% are Black, compared to only 31% of Black Marylanders in the general population. Shamefully, Maryland also leads the nation in sentencing young Black men to the longest prison terms, at a rate 25% higher than the next nearest state, Mississippi.

For these reasons, I encourage you to vote favorably on the Maryland Second Look Act SB291.

Thank you for your consideration.

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