

IN SUPPORT OF SB 181

To: Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
From: Gender, Prison, and Trauma Clinic, University of Maryland Carey School of Law
Date: January 23, 2025
Re: Written Testimony in support of Senate Bill 181

The University of Maryland Carey School of Law Gender, Prison, and Trauma Clinic unequivocally supports Senate Bill 181.*

The Gender, Prison, and Trauma Clinic represents incarcerated clients convicted of crimes related to their own gender-based victimization. The Clinic represents a number of clients who would benefit from the changes to the standards for geriatric and medical parole.

Our clients have included a woman diagnosed with stage four metastatic breast cancer, Parkinsonism, and paranoid schizophrenia. She suffered from debilitating weakness from chemotherapy. She was confined to a wheelchair. She was completely unable to care for herself and often sat in her own urine for hours or days. She applied for medical parole and was finally released to a treatment facility—but not on parole. She was only released after the court resentenced her based on the threat posed by the COVID pandemic to vulnerable incarcerated people. Her many infirmities were not sufficient to qualify her for medical parole.

We have had clients who have cancer, who are blind, who have spent months and years in the infirmary with chronic illnesses, who have undergone open heart surgery, who can barely walk. None of them poses a threat to society. All of them would have benefitted from treatment not readily available in the prison environment. But because they are not close to death, as is required by the current standards for medical parole, they do not qualify.

Many of these clients are also close to, or well over, sixty years old. They have participated in (and in many cases, led) every program available to them through the prison system. They earn sterling work evaluations and are highly thought of by prison staff. They would pose no risk to society upon release. And yet they remain in prison, away from families and communities to whom they could contribute. Changing the standards for medical and geriatric parole would return our clients to communities better suited to care for them in their illnesses and old age and alleviate the burden borne by the taxpayers for their support. We urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 181.

*This written testimony is submitted on behalf of the Gender, Prison, and Trauma Clinic at the University of Maryland Carey School of Law and not on behalf of the School of Law or University of Maryland, Baltimore.