

**MARGARET MARTIN BARRY**  
***TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO***  
**THE SENATE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE**

**IN SUPPORT OF SB 291, MARYLAND SECOND LOOK ACT**

As a concerned Maryland resident, I ask you to favorably vote SB 291, the Maryland Second Look Act, out of this Committee and support its passage into law. I have testified in the past in support of this legislation, in my prior role as a law professor and as a member of Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club. I plead yet again for its passage, and thank Senator Sydnor for his leadership in sponsoring this important bill.

Rehabilitation is a central tenet of our system of incarceration. While we have flipped the tiller mightily in favor of punishment and ignored the numerous studies that demonstrate that lengthy sentences do little to deter crime, our sentencing laws and the orderly running of our prisons rely, nonetheless, on returning rehabilitated citizens to the community.

Yet, there is a sense that people who are given lengthy sentences are fundamentally incorrigible. This is simply untrue. You have heard in the past and will hear the evidence that proves it, particularly as it applies to older people.

A meaningful chance of release from prison is a powerful incentive for people who are serving long sentences to remain steadfast in their efforts to be rehabilitated.

Recognizing and rewarding an individual's personal transformation is humane and just. It is also a cost-effective in that it costs a lot to house people in our prisons, and more as they get older.

Yet we persist in allowing people incarcerated for many, many years to languish in prison. Their efforts to improve themselves are ignored. Their potential as returned citizens discarded.

These days we are particularly aware of the threatened tax increases and loss of needed services. Keeping in prison people whose records demonstrate that they meet the terms of SB 291 is a misuse of our limited spending capacity and unnecessarily extends dependency of people who could contribute to our tax base.

I have purposely kept my comments brief since I know you will hear in depth testimony from others who will make important points in support of this legislation for you to consider. My primary purpose is to convey that SB 291 is needed, it makes sense and, though these days this view seems particularly fragile, it is the right thing to do.