



Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc.

Continuing the Missions of the Stephanie Roper Committee and Foundation, Inc.

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January 28, 2025

Maryland Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
East Miller Senate Building, Room 2
Annapolis, MD

Dear Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB 291, a bill that proposes allowing violent offenders to petition for resentencing after serving just 20 years of their sentence, regardless of its original length. This legislation raises serious concerns about public safety, the rights of victims, and the overall impact on our justice system.

Having worked in the criminal justice system across multiple states, I can say that no other state exhibits the same level of confusion and disregard for crime victims as Maryland. I have been an attorney for over 17 years, serving as a prosecutor in Washington State, California, and Maryland. Additionally, I spent four and a half years at the California Department of State Hospitals, where I provided psychiatric care for individuals in the criminal justice system, including those deemed incompetent to stand trial and those identified as sexually violent predators.

I have served as a victim rights attorney at the Maryland Crime Victims Resource Center (MCVRC) for three years and became the Deputy Director for the past year. This role has been the most rewarding of my career, allowing me to support crime victims during their most challenging times.

First and foremost, in considering SB 291, we must recognize that violent offenders have committed acts that not only infringe upon the rights of their victims but also deeply affect families and communities. Allowing these individuals to seek resentencing after just two decades risks undermining the severity of their crimes and the suffering endured by their victims. Victims should not be forced to relive their trauma every few years as they face the possibility of their attackers being released. Such a system fails to provide the necessary closure and healing that victims and their families need.

Moreover, the proposal to allow offenders to petition for resentencing every three years places an additional emotional burden on victims. These hearings can serve as painful reminders of the violence they endured and can hinder their ability to move forward with their lives. The constant uncertainty surrounding



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the status of the offender creates an environment of fear and anxiety for victims, who deserve assurance that their safety and well-being will be prioritized.

Furthermore, the focus of our justice system should be on protecting innocent individuals rather than catering to the rights of violent offenders. Granting such frequent opportunities for resentencing diminishes the importance of accountability for one's actions. The message sent by SB 291 is that violent crime may not result in the long-term consequences that both the victims and society expect and deserve.

In conclusion, I urge you to reconsider the implications of SB 291. The safety and well-being of victims must take precedence over the interests of those who have committed violent offenses. Our justice system should strive to protect those who have been wronged and provide them with the peace of mind they need to heal. Rather than facilitating the early release of violent offenders, we should focus on supporting victims and ensuring that justice is served in a way that respects their experiences and needs.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,

Joanna D. Mupanduki

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