

Testimony for the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
SB 291  
January 30th, 2025  
Favorable

My name is Michele Kennedy Kouadio and I support SB 291 Maryland Second Look Act.

As an advocate, I have presented oral and written testimony in support of bills including Telephone Cost Savings in Prison, Deaths in Custody, Second Look and the Ombudsman bill which passed in 2024 legislative House and Senate sessions. This year I support Second Look, Medical Geriatric Parole and changes to Restrictive Housing.

I work with many advocate organizations including the Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR) and MD C.U.R. E. on a more effective parole and decarceration system - with a goal of unburdening a prison system continually understaffed by over 30 percent. DPSCS employs dangerous use of overtime (costs and staff) despite the admonitions against use of excessive overtime use in the 2024 Moss report as part of the 2025 proposed budget.

This year, I am supporting Second Look legislation to help decarcerate people in prison that merit judicial reconsideration after serving 20 years and meeting other criteria.

The current parole system has very low release rates for people who are serving long term sentences. Life sentences represent about 23 percent of the prison population and sentences over 15-40 years represent another 30 percent.

Maryland taxes cannot support 53 percent of this population whose cost rise from \$50,000 per person to upwards of \$60,000 per person as they age.

People in prison serving long term sentences could be much more useful to their families and the Maryland community if they were working. I work with people who were in prison for too many years and who are now released and working, paying taxes and contributing to their families and community.

Please approve this bill.