



**Testimony for the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
March 27, 2025**

**HB 1156 – Correctional Services – Maryland Parole
Commission – Members and Hearing Examiners**

UNFAVORABLE

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The ACLU of Maryland opposes HB 1156, which eliminates the appointment and utilization of hearing examiners, among other provisions. For more than a decade, our organization has worked directly with people navigating the parole process, particularly candidates with life sentences who comprise the majority of those currently considered directly by commissioners rather than hearing examiners. Within our daily work, one of the top issues we encounter and hear about is the delayed process at almost every step.

As these delays persist even with the Commission only focused on a fraction of those currently eligible for parole, it is chilling to think what would happen if hearing examiners are eliminated by this bill and commissioners suddenly become solely responsible for every part of every parole case. Even with its provisions increasing the number of parole commissioners, HB 1156 does not address other factors that would significantly contribute to delays, most notably the lack of time limits on the Commission's decision-making process.

With the continued absence of needed deadlines, one of our clients is still waiting to come home even though they were granted immediate release at the beginning of this year, more than five months after the final investigative stage of their parole consideration was complete.

But for this delay, our client would have had the chance to finally hug one of their closest family members who unfortunately passed away right before the Commission eventually conducted the full *en banc* vote needed to approve their release.

There are very real consequences of taking action under this bill that will only increase these delays for the sake of implementing these major changes not currently being sought by the vast majority of our directly impacted partners. If this committee would like to tackle parole changes actually needed right now, we recommend starting by imposing time

limits on the parole process, and decreasing reliance on flawed and lengthy risk assessments.

With this in mind, the ACLU of Maryland urges an unfavorable report on HB 1156.

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