

# **DPSCS\_HB1156\_OPPOSE.docx (2).pdf**

Uploaded by: Christopher Thoms

Position: UNF



**Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services**  
**Office of the Secretary**

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**BILL: HOUSE BILL 1156**

**POSITION: OPPOSE**

STATE OF MARYLAND

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**EXPLANATION:** HB 1156 proposes significant changes to the Maryland Parole Commission by removing the authority of the Commission to appoint and utilize hearing examiners. Additionally, the bill changes the process by which members of the Commission are selected.

**COMMENTS:**

- The Maryland Parole Commission (MPC) is charged with determining on a case-by-case basis whether incarcerated individuals serving sentences of six months or more in State or local correctional facilities are suitable for release into the community under certain conditions or supervision by the Division of Parole and Probation.
- Parole Commissioners and hearing examiners hold hearings via videoconferences and in correctional facilities throughout the State. The Commission also holds open parole hearings and has a strong commitment to victim rights.
- HB 1156 undermines the critical role that hearing examiners play in ensuring fair and impartial parole hearings. Hearing examiners are essential in providing independent and comprehensive reviews of parole applications, ensuring transparency and accountability with the parole process. Additionally, hearing examiners draft new policies and procedures for the MPC and serve as liaisons to other criminal justice agencies.
- Rather than removing hearing examiners, the focus should be on reinforcing their roles and ensuring they have the necessary resources to perform their duties effectively.
- In addition, HB 1156 proposes to change the appointment process for members of the MPC. The current method of appointment allows for a more balanced and impartial selection of members, ensuring that those who serve on the Commission possess the necessary expertise and experience in corrections and rehabilitation.
- Ensuring that members are appointed through a transparent and inclusive process is essential for maintaining public trust in the parole

system. A shift in appointment authority could raise concerns about political influence and bias in decision-making.

- Lastly, the proposed changes in this bill would have a profound fiscal and operational impact on the MPC. To implement these changes, the MPC would need to expand its workforce by at least 50%, with a potential increase up to 100%. This includes a significant increase in the number of Commissioners, support staff, and administrative personnel. Such a staffing increase would necessitate not only larger office space but also additional office and electronic equipment to support the expanded Commission.
- It is essential that the Maryland Parole Commission uphold fairness and equity, remaining steadfast in its commitment to justice and rehabilitation for all individuals.

**CONCLUSION:** For these reasons, the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services respectfully requests an **UNFAVORABLE** Committee report on House Bill 1156.

## **ACLU unfavorable HB1156**

Uploaded by: Dara Johnson

Position: UNF



**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.

AMERICAN CIVIL  
LIBERTIES UNION  
FOUNDATION OF  
MARYLAND

# **HB 1156 - Correctional Services - Maryland Parole**

Uploaded by: Denise Riley

Position: UNF

Kenya Campbell  
PRESIDENT

LaBrina Hopkins  
SECRETARY-TREASURER

**Written Testimony Submitted to the Maryland Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
HB 1156 - Correctional Services - Maryland Parole Commission –  
Members and Hearing Examiners  
March 27, 2025**

**SUPPORT**

AFT Maryland asks for an unfavorable report on HB 1156. This legislation poses a threat to the hearing and examination officers' positions within the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS). The bill's provisions could result in the elimination of their positions.

HB 1156 does not include provisions for the retention or reassignment of these employees, leaving them with uncertainty regarding their professional futures. At a time when recruitment and retention within public service positions are already difficult, passing legislation that threatens job security for dedicated public servants is counterproductive.

I urge the committee to carefully consider the unintended consequences of HB 1156 and to reject this bill in the interest of fairness, due process, and the preservation of a skilled workforce within DPSCS. The state must protect these employees rather than enact policies that will cost them their state positions.

AFT Maryland again asks for an unfavorable report on HB 1156





## **Unfavorable -HB1156.pdf**

Uploaded by: Felicia Hawkins

Position: UNF



# MARYLAND PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES COUNCIL

AFT, AFL-CIO Local 6197

A union of professionals  
in service to the people  
of Maryland.

**Written Testimony Submitted to the  
Judicial Proceedings Committee  
HB1156- Correctional Services – Maryland Parole Commission –  
March 25, 2025**

**UNFAVORABLE**

The Maryland Professional Employees Council (MPEC), AFT Local 6197, seeks an unfavorable report for HB1156.

HB 1156 will affect 45 bargaining unit employees and threatens the positions of hearing and examination officers within the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS). Its provisions could lead to the elimination or substantial modification of their roles.

HB 1156 lacks sufficient provisions for retaining or reassigning these employees, leaving them uncertain about their professional futures. At a time when recruitment and retention in public service positions are already challenging, passing legislation that threatens job security for dedicated public servants is counterproductive.

We urge the committee to carefully consider the unintended consequences of HB 1156 and to reject this bill in the interest of fairness, due process, and preserving a skilled workforce within DPSCS. The state must protect these employees rather than enact policies that harm their job security.

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