

Ladies and gentlemen,

My name is Curtis Alston, and I stand before you today to testify on behalf of House Bill 853, the Maryland Second Look Act. This bill represents hope for individuals who have transformed their lives and seek the opportunity to contribute positively to society.

I understand the gravity of the crimes committed and the pain endured by victims and their families. Acknowledging this, I also know firsthand the capacity for change. I was once sentenced to two life sentences, one without parole, plus 70 years. Through God, personal rehabilitation, and self-discovery, I found who I am and redefined my path. Today, I serve on the Governor's Reentry Task Force, the Lived Experience Council for the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services and run my own businesses. My journey is a testament to the potential for redemption.

House Bill 853 offers individuals who have served at least 20 years the chance to petition for a sentence reduction, provided they are not a danger to the public. This process includes thorough court evaluations to ensure public safety remains paramount.

Consider the human aspect: envision someone you love deeply who made a grave mistake, resulting in devastating consequences for another family and their own. Imagine that person striving for decades to make amends, to change, and to prevent others from making similar mistakes. Wouldn't you want them to have a second chance?

This bill is not about minimizing the suffering of victims but about recognizing the profound transformations individuals can undergo. It's about allowing those who have demonstrated genuine change to contribute positively to our communities.

I urge you to support HB 853. Let's believe in the possibility of change and offer a second chance to those who have earned it.

Thank you.