



Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc.

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

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February 21, 2025

RE: Unfavorable HB 311

Dear Chair Clippinger and Esteemed Committee Members,

Parole is a longstanding tradition, one that has been an integral part of Maryland's criminal justice system since the Civil War era. The first Advisory Board of Parole was established in 1914, and in 1922, the Parole Commissioner assumed responsibility for overseeing parole functions. Over the years, there have been several iterations of the parole system, with the current iteration, the Maryland Parole Commission, having been in place since 1976.

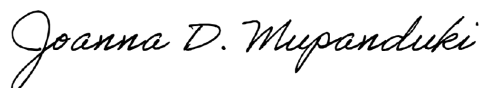
Having worked in the criminal justice system across multiple states, I can say that no other state exhibits the same level of confusion and disregard for crime victims as Maryland. I have been an attorney for over 17 years, serving as a prosecutor in Washington State, California, and Maryland. Additionally,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

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

However, under the leadership of the current Secretary of the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS), Carolyn Scruggs, there has been an increasing push to alter both the structure of the Parole Commission and the statutes governing parole. This push is primarily driven by the belief that more violent offenders should be released from prison, an approach that overlooks the critical importance of public safety. This latest legislative proposal is a continuation of that trend. While Maryland's prison population has significantly decreased, dropping over 20% from a high of more than 24,000 inmates in 2003 to just over 15,000 this year, this bill threatens to undermine the delicate balance between rehabilitation and public safety by opening the door wider to the release of violent offenders.

The entire point of this bill is to take the governor out of the parole process. The Governor can use common sense and consider the actual cost to public safety and morale if a violent offender, who was sentenced to life imprisonment, is released on medical parole. For those reasons, I oppose HB 311 and urge an unfavorable finding.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joanna D. Mupanduki". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Joanna D. Mupanduki
Deputy Director