

**TESTIMONY ON HB853  
MARYLAND SECOND LOOK ACT**

**House Judiciary Committee  
February 18, 2025**

**SUPPORT**

Submitted by: Danielle Williams

Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett and members of the Judiciary Committee:

I, Danielle Williams, am testifying in support of HB853, the Maryland Second Look Act. I am submitting this testimony as a community member in District 4 as well as an impacted family member.

Passage of the Maryland Second Look Act would create a meaningful opportunity for sentence modification for incarcerated people after having served 20 years of their sentence. I firmly believe that those individuals who are able to demonstrate their growth and rehabilitation, such that they are no longer a threat to public safety, should have the opportunity for release.

As a licensed clinical social worker, I have had the pleasure of working with individuals within the correctional institution and observed first hand that incarcerated individuals have the capacity to rehabilitate themselves. In fact, I have seen incarcerated individuals return to society after long periods of incarceration and demonstrate not only change for themselves, but work towards change in the community. For this reason, I am in support of the Second Look Act.

This bill is an important tool in making meaningful opportunities for release happen, as currently, incarcerated people in MD can only petition the Court for modification within 90 days of sentencing, severely limiting any potential sentence modifications<sup>1</sup>. Maryland judges used to have the ability to review sentences, an important safety valve for extreme sentences, but this opportunity was eliminated with a rule change in 2004<sup>2</sup> Furthermore for more than 25 years, Maryland's parole system was not available to people serving life with parole sentences. Now, the Governor has finally been removed from the parole process, but this is not enough to remedy decades of wrongful denials which contributed to the bloated prison system and its extreme racial disparities.

A Second look should be a redemptive pathway to allow incarcerated individuals the opportunity to demonstrate reform. They should be able to use their past as a faucet of purpose and

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<sup>1</sup> Maryland Rule 4-345

<sup>2</sup> [Court of Appeals of Maryland Rules Order](#)

empowerment rather than sit away confined and in despair. In fact, the mere idea of a second chance could and probably will empower those who would otherwise have no hope, to work towards change and help others find their light. For these reasons, I encourage you to vote favorably on the Maryland Second Look Act HB853.

Thank you,

Danielle Williams, LCSW-C, LICSW