

**TESTIMONY ON HB 0853
MARYLAND SECOND LOOK ACT
Judiciary Committee
February 14, 2025**

SUPPORT

Submitted by: Nigel Jackson

Chair Clippenger, Vice Chair Barlette and members of the Judiciary Committee:

I, am testifying in support of HB 0853, the Maryland Second Look Act. I am submitting this testimony as a previously incarcerated person that reshaped his life.

Today is my 730th day out of Federal Prison. I made mistakes and repaid my debt to society. I firmly believe that individuals who are able to demonstrate their growth and rehabilitation and are no longer a threat to public safety, should have the opportunity for release.

In the two years that I have been home I have obtained a position with the Mayor's Office, become an AmeriCorp Member, and I have received my community health worker certification as well as numerous behavioral health certification. In my role with the Mayor's Office of Employment and Development in Baltimore City and I have helped over 200 people connect to resources as well as jobs in the community. I am a prime example that an incarcerated person can change their life.

Passage of the Maryland Second Look Act gives other incarcerated individuals a meaningful opportunity for sentence modification after having served 20 years of their sentence. This bill is an important tool in making deserved 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 modifications¹. This bill also has serious racial justice implications, given that of the 2,212 people serving life sentences in MD, 80% are Black², a huge disparity when compared to the only 31% of Black Marylanders in the general population³.

In 2021, the General Assembly made a positive step by passing the Juvenile Restoration Act [SB0494/HB0409](#) which allowed individuals who were minors sentenced as adults the ability to petition the Court for sentence modification after 20 years. The Maryland Second Look Act would extend this ability both to youth sentenced after the JRA went into effect (who were excluded from the bill) and other incarcerated people in Maryland who committed a crime aged 18 and up.

Given the tendency for people to age out of crime and the very low recidivism rate for other individuals released from decades-long sentences, this decision is unlikely to negatively impact public safety. This has been seen with the Ungers, 200 Marylanders serving life sentences, who were released after the landmark case Maryland v Unger, who, five years after the case, had a 1% recidivism rate⁴. We know many more men and women serving decades-long sentences who

have worked hard, hoping for their chance to reenter and succeed in their communities as I have done.

For these reasons, I encourage you to vote **favorably** on the **Maryland Second Look Act HB 0853**.

Thank you.

¹ Maryland Rule 4-345

² [MD DPSCS FY 2022 Q4 Inmate Characteristics Statistics \(2022\)](#)

³ [United States Census Data](#) 2021

⁴ Justice Policy Institute [Fact Sheet: The Ungers](#) (2018)