

TESTIMONY ON HB 853
MARYLAND SECOND LOOK ACT
House Judiciary Committee
February 18th, 2025
SUPPORT

Submitted by: **Craig Muhammad**

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

I, Craig Muhammad, am testifying in support of HB 853, the Maryland Second Look Act. I am submitting this testimony as a previously incarcerated person, as Director of Project Emancipation Now (PEN) and as a member of The Second Look Coalition.

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.

On September 24, 2024, I was released from incarceration after serving 42 years and 32 days. During my incarceration I took advantage of every opportunity to become the best version of myself and to be equipped to make amends for the acts I committed in ignorance. I earned a B.S. degree in psychology, became a special education and GED tutor in correctional education, became a writing tutor with the University of Baltimore Second Chance College Program, received certification as a Peer Recovery Specialist and became cofounder of Project Emancipation Now (PEN). I am also a three time published author. PEN is a gang emancipation, violence interruption, mentoring and victim-community impact services organization. PEN had emancipated more men from gangs than any other entity in Maryland. During my incarceration, I have mentored hundreds of youth. After my release, I brought my skill set to the community, where I have provided Certified Peer Recovery Specialist (CPRS) support services to hundreds of men and women in less than the approximately 4 months that I have been released. And I am in the process of bringing PEN to the community. The things I have detailed today are only a fraction of the things I accomplished during my incarceration, to equip myself with the skill-set to make amends where amends are possible, and to build healthy communities. PEN defines healthy communities as communities where children are safe to play in; communities where people are safe to live in; and communities that promote the full potential of every resident. There are many more men and women in prison that have more impressive portfolios than I that deserve a second chance. That is why I humbly and respectfully ask this Honorable body to support the Maryland Second Look Act (HB 853)

Thank you.