

HELPING OURSELVES TO TRANSFORM

EDUCATING AND PROMOTING
MASS LIBERATION

2-14-2025

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

Re: Vote Favorable to HB853 The Maryland Second Look Act

I, Dr. Carmen Johnson, submit this testimony in support of HB853, the Maryland Second Look Act, on behalf of Helping Ourselves to Transform, which I founded.

This bill provides a crucial opportunity for sentence modification for incarcerated individuals who have served 20 years, allowing those who demonstrate growth and rehabilitation to seek release. Currently, Maryland limits sentence modifications to within 90 days of sentencing, eliminating meaningful review opportunities.

HB853 also addresses racial justice concerns, as 80% of Maryland's 2,212 individuals serving life sentences are Black, despite making up only 31% of the state's population. Additionally, Maryland leads the nation in sentencing young Black men to the longest prison terms.

Given the low recidivism rates among individuals released after long sentences, passing this bill is both just and practical. For these reasons, I urge a favorable vote on HB853.

Sincerely,

Dr. Carmen Johnson

Founder, Helping Ourselves to Transform

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