

February 2, 2025

Alvin Lee  
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**TESTIMONY ON HB853  
MARYLAND SECOND LOOK ACT**

**House Judiciary Committee  
February 18, 2025**

**SUPPORT**

Submitted by: **Alvin Lee**

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

**I, Alvin Lee, am testifying in support of HB853, the Maryland Second Look Act. I am submitting this testimony as a community member of District 9A, as someone who has worked with families affected by incarceration, and as the founder of the Student Justice Alliance.**

My favorite thing about our democracy in our country is that everyone's voice matters. No matter who you are or where you come from, your beliefs and ideas matter to the fabric of American democracy. So while I am too young to have a vote, I hope you'll take the time to listen to my voice.

It is also my belief in the power of our voices that compels me to write. I am writing to express my strong support for the Second Look Act. This legislation would grant incarcerated individuals a chance for a review of their sentence after 20 years of incarceration. It allows them to petition for themselves and their efforts to achieve growth and rehabilitation. In the end, passing this legislation gives some of Maryland's most marginalized population a voice and a second chance.

But it also provides long-needed reform to one of the most discriminatory facets of our justice system: parole. For more than 25 years, Maryland's parole system was not available to people serving life with parole sentences because Governors routinely denied parole with little to no explanation. While we have since revoked the Governor's power to deny parole, we haven't revoked the persistent inequalities in the system. Parole is not a judicial hearing, meaning

individuals lack due process rights and legal representation. This legislation, the Second Look Act, guarantees the right for a review of one's sentence *with* a full and complete due process and a right to legal representation: a way to ensure the justice system treats everybody's voice equally. The voices of *everyone* matter, and I ask this committee to uphold this promise.

The Act would require that victims receive notice that a resentencing hearing would be held, and require the judge to consider the victim's input, should the victim or the victim's representative choose to offer a statement. In fact, victims, too, prefer, by 2 to 1, a criminal legal system that focuses more on rehabilitating people who commit crimes than punishing them. Under the Second Look Act, everybody's voice matters.

I've worked with families and children whose parents are incarcerated. Through these experiences, I've learned that the greatest consequences of the justice system are often felt by those outside of it. Their children, their churches, and their communities would all benefit from the release of individuals who are able to demonstrate their growth and rehabilitation. The people in Maryland's carceral system are fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters. They work hard to grow and learn from their mistakes. They deserve an equal voice. They deserve your promise to uphold Maryland's values of fairness and justice. They deserve a second look.

I urge you to vote **favorably** on the **Maryland Second Look Act HB853** and give Maryland's incarcerated individuals a fair chance at justice.

Thank you.