



**TESTIMONY FOR HB0853  
CRIMINAL PROCEDURE – PETITION TO REDUCE SENTENCE (MARYLAND SECOND  
LOOK ACT)**

**Bill Sponsor:** Delegate Pasteur

**Committee:** Environment and Transportation

**Organization Submitting:** Maryland Legislative Coalition

**Person Submitting:** Cecilia Plante, co-chair

**Position:** FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0853 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

The United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world. We have historically put many people in jail for possessing small amounts of marijuana (which is now legalized) and for other small crimes. In Maryland the incarceration rate of Black men ranks among the highest in the country. Black men make up 14 percent of Maryland's general population but consist of 73 percent of the male prison population in the state, according to the Attorney General's Office. Black women make up 16 percent of the state's population but a disproportionate 53 percent of the female prison population (Washington Post, 10/26/23). And Maryland has the fourth highest rate of prisoners convicted as children, with the school to prison pipeline still a risk for disadvantaged students.

More needs to be done to address our systemic injustice in policing and inequity in the criminal justice system. This bill allows an inmate who has served at least 20 years to petition the court for a reduced sentence and at least 5 years have passed since the court decided any previously filed petition. The decision to grant the petition would be based on factors typically used in parole hearings.

This bill reduces the impact of discrimination in our criminal justice system that results in harsher sentences that appear to be race related. It not only benefits a prisoner unjustly sentenced but also stems the ancillary damage to their families. Moreover, reduced sentences save Maryland taxpayers over \$38,000 per inmate annually. Money that could be better spent on schools.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee