



OUT FOR JUSTICE

**TESTIMONY ON HB 0853**

**MARYLAND SECOND LOOK ACT**

**Judiciary Committee**

**February 14, 2025**

**SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Clippenger, Vice Chair Barlette and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My Name is Terry Speaks, and I am the Leadership Development Organizer at Out for Justice. Out for Justice, Inc. (OFJ) is an organization led by individuals who are both directly and indirectly impacted by the criminal justice system. We advocate for the reform of policies and practices that adversely affect successful reintegration into society. We accomplish our mission through the three E's: 1) **ENGAGE** formerly incarcerated individuals, families and friends through grassroots outreach and community events; 2) **EDUCATE** our member base and communities on the policies and practices impacting our communities and navigating the legislative process for reform; 3) **EMPOWER** those impacted by the criminal justice system to utilize their voices and experiences to enact tangible change.

I am writing in support of **HB 0853 MARYLAND SECOND LOOK ACT**. 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.

One in seven incarcerated individuals are serving a sentence for 50 years or more. These years of incarceration weigh heavily on our communities and our state budget. Many of our neighbors, friends and family members were given excessive sentences due to past "tough on crime" policies that have proven ineffective, and many more clearly pose no risk to society if they were released. These individuals deserve an opportunity to be with their families, pursue their dreams, and invest in their communities.



## OUT FOR JUSTICE

I am urging this committee to help pass a law that allows incarcerated people to petition the court for a review and modification of their long sentence. Passing this law will:

- 1) allow individuals to submit a petition for sentence review if they have been sentenced to incarceration for 20 years or more and their last sentence review was at least 5 years ago,
- 2) grant the right to legal counsel and provide a public defender if they cannot afford it,
- 3) require a hearing for this sentence review,
- 4) give notice to any victims about the hearing, and
- 5) require judges to reduce sentences when confinement is no longer necessary for public safety, especially if an individual was convicted of a crime they allegedly committed as a minor.

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

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Terry Speaks  
Leadership Development Organizer  
Out for Justice, Inc.