



Bill Title: Criminal Procedure - Petition to Reduce Sentence (Maryland Second Look Act)

Position: SUPPORT (FAV)

To: House Judiciary Committee

From: Erica Puentes, Progressive Maryland Legislative Coordinator on behalf of Progressive Maryland

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

Progressive Maryland supports HB853, the Maryland Second Look Act. Progressive Maryland is a member based organization led by and focused on working class, Black, and brown communities. Our grassroots advocacy focuses include racial justice and economic justice with the aim of building a more just and equitable Maryland. We have over 125,000 members and supporters across the state, with significant bases in Baltimore City, Prince George's, Montgomery, Frederick, Harford counties, and the Eastern Shore.

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. 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.

As an organization with core anti-racist values, we stand against all forms of exploitation. We recognize that the carceral system is deeply intertwined with racial oppression as mass incarceration has historically and continues to target Black and brown communities across the nation. In Maryland 80% of people serving life sentences are Black, a huge disparity when compared to the only 31% of Black Marylanders in the general population. Shamefully, Maryland also leads the nation in sentencing young Black men to the longest prison terms, at a rate 25% higher than the next nearest state, Mississippi. In order to reduce racial disparities, Maryland must create meaningful avenues for release for Marylanders who have demonstrated their rehabilitation.

This should be one of the many steps we take toward reducing our reliance on the cruel and punitive carceral system and instead focus on investments in jobs, education, housing, and healthcare. As Angela Davis writes: "Prisons do not disappear social problems, they disappear human beings." We must stop *disappearing* human beings with cages and give them the opportunity to rehabilitate and reintegrate into society.

For these reasons, Progressive Maryland encourages you to vote **favorably** on the **Maryland Second Look Act HB853**.