



**TESTIMONY TO THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE**

**HB 853 Criminal Procedure - Petition to Reduce Sentence (Maryland Second Look Act)**

**POSITION: Support**

**BY: Linda Kohn, President**

**DATE: February 18, 2025**

The League of Women Voters supports a criminal justice system that is just, effective, equitable, transparent, and that fosters public trust at all stages, including sentencing that considers the individual circumstances of the person charged and the nature of the crime. We, in addition, support the elimination of systemic bias, including the disproportionate incarceration of persons from marginalized communities.

**HB 853** proposes reduced sentences for those who have been confined for at least two decades and have adhered to institutional rules, engaged in enrichment programs, and demonstrated remediation sufficient to merit re-entry into society. Mitigating family and community circumstances present at the time of initial sentencing also may be considered. Some of those circumstances may well have been due to systemic bias and contributed to the fact that Black residents in Maryland are [disproportionately incarcerated](#), comprising 30% of the state's residents but 71% of its prison population.

According to the [State Attorney General's Office](#), Maryland has the nation's highest percentage of Black people in its prisons when compared to the general population. To address this disparity, the [Maryland Equitable Justice Collaborative](#) issued several recommendations that include authorizing judges to [reconsider and reduce sentences](#) for rehabilitated persons.

We urge a favorable report on HB 835.