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Judiciary Committee

100 Taylor House Office Building

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**Tuesday, February 25, 2025**

**HB0190 – Correctional Services – Geriatric and Medical Parole**

Position: **FAVORABLE**

Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett, and Esteemed Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Lauren Pruitt, and I am the Legal Director at FreeState Justice, a nonprofit organization dedicated to serving LGBTQ+ Marylanders from diverse backgrounds. I am writing in support of **HB0190**, which seeks to require the Maryland Parole Commission to consider an individual's age and the totality of the circumstances in deciding whether to grant parole.

**HB0190** addresses a critical shortcoming in current parole practices that affects elderly and infirm incarcerated individuals in Maryland. Despite posing minimal risk to public safety, elderly individuals are disproportionately denied parole compared to younger populations.

Research indicates that rates of recidivism decrease with age, with those 65 and older least likely to recidivate in the five years following their release (Prison Policy Institute). The Vera Institute additionally reports an arrest rate of just 2% for those aged 50 to 65, which drops nearly to 0% for those above 65. Despite such rates, in Maryland, just 28% of individuals over the age of 60 are granted parole, compared to a rate of 43% for individuals aged 31 to 35, and 37% for individuals 25 and younger (Justice Policy Institute). **HB0190** is necessary to address this disparity.

The current system for evaluating medical parole is inadequate, leaving many individuals to die in prison before their case is decided. In Maryland, just 32% of medical parole petitions were granted between 2015 and 2021 (Justice Policy Institute). Such parole reform is necessary to build a more humane system in Maryland that ensures eligible individuals may live their last days outside of prison.

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With an aging prison population, correctional facilities remain ill-equipped to handle the unique challenges that come with housing elderly incarcerated individuals. It is estimated that the cost of housing elderly incarcerated individuals is nearly double, if not more, than housing younger populations (Vera Institute). Many elderly incarcerated individuals experience chronic health conditions at rates higher than the general population but are not provided adequate healthcare while incarcerated. This legislation will allow for such eligible individuals to receive care outside of correctional facilities, thus reducing the number of taxpayer dollars spent on continued unnecessary incarceration.

I strongly urge the committee to issue a favorable report for **HB0190**. By requiring the Maryland Parole Commission to consider an individual's age and the totality of the circumstances in deciding whether to grant parole, Maryland will take a significant step toward ensuring a more equitable parole system for elderly and infirm incarcerated individuals and will join a growing number of states implementing such measures.

Sincerely,

Lauren Pruitt  
Legal Director  
FreeState Justice

**Sources:**

1. Chronic Punishment: The unmet health needs of people in state prisons, <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/chronicpunishment.html#physicalhealth>
2. Safe at Home: Improving Maryland's Parole Release Decision Making, <https://justicepolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Safe-At-Home.pdf>
3. The aging prison population: Causes, costs, and consequences, <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2023/08/02/aging/>
4. Aging Out: Using Compassionate Release to Address the Growth of Aging and Infirm Prison Populations, available at <https://www.vera.org/publications/compassionate-release-aging-infirm-prison-populations>