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Judiciary Committee  
100 Taylor House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Friday, February 14, 2025

### **HB0853 – Criminal Procedure - Petition to Reduce Sentence (Maryland Second Look Act)**

Position: **FAVORABLE**

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

My name is Ronnie L. Taylor, and I serve as the Community Advocacy Manager at FreeState Justice, a nonprofit organization dedicated to addressing legal and systemic inequities affecting Maryland's LGBTQ+ community. I am here to testify in strong support of **HB0853**, the Maryland Second Look Act, which provides a mechanism for individuals who have served significant portions of their sentences to petition for sentence reduction.

**HB0853** addresses the pressing issue of lengthy incarcerations that often fail to consider individual growth, rehabilitation, and the evolving understanding of justice. Maryland incarcerates approximately 15,000 people in its state prisons, with 21% aged 51 or older. This significant aging prison population underscores the need for mechanisms like the Second Look Act to reassess long-term sentences.

The Maryland Second Look Act allows individuals who have served at least 20 years of their sentence to petition the court for a sentence reduction. This process acknowledges the potential for personal transformation and the importance of evaluating sentences in light of current circumstances. Notably, the Act includes provisions to ensure public safety, such as requiring the court to determine that the individual is not a danger to the public before granting a sentence reduction.

Research indicates that long-term incarceration does not necessarily correlate with increased public safety. In fact, studies have shown that individuals who have served extended sentences and are released at an older age have lower recidivism rates. For instance, a report by the Maryland Department of Public

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Safety and Correctional Services found that three-year recidivism rates among inmates aged 45 and above at release were lower compared to younger cohorts.

In my role at FreeState Justice, I have witnessed the profound impact of lengthy incarcerations on individuals, particularly within the LGBTQ+ community. Many have demonstrated remarkable personal growth and a commitment to contributing positively to society. The Second Look Act offers a pathway for these individuals to have their rehabilitation recognized and to reintegrate into the community as productive members.

In closing, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report for **HB0853**. This legislation not only addresses the critical need for sentence reevaluation but also reinforces Maryland's commitment to justice, rehabilitation, and the humane treatment of incarcerated individuals.

Best,

*Ronnie L. Taylor*

Ronnie L. Taylor

**Sources:**

1. [\*MD ranks among worst states for long term incarceration / Public News Service\*](#)
2. [\*Maryland profile | Prison Policy Initiative\*](#)
3. [\*Locked Away for Life: New Report from The Sentencing Project Unveils Alarming Data on Long-Term Imprisonment – The Sentencing Project\*](#)
4. [\*2022 Recidivism JCR\*](#)
5. [\*Data Resource Guide Fiscal Year 2023 - Section V: Recidivism Rates and Outcome Measures\*](#)
6. [\*Austin-2020. Safely-Reducing-Prison-Populations-FINAL-2.22.21.pdf\*](#)