

**TESTIMONY ON HB853
MARYLAND SECOND LOOK ACT**

**House Judiciary Committee
February 18, 2025**

SUPPORT

Submitted by: Pastor Willie Mae Hill

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

I, retired Pastor Willie Mae Hill am testifying in support of HB853, the Maryland Second Look Act. I am submitting this testimony as an impacted family member, with a deeply personal connection to this bill. My son, Louis Hill III, a Morehouse College Graduate, has been incarcerated since the age of 25. Now 57 years old, he has already served 32 years of a sentence that include two life sentences without parole, plus an additional 80 years.

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.

Despite the Judge's statement in his OPINION that it was NOT proven that my son was the PRINCIPLE in the case. And that this case was an ANOMLY based on my son's background, Despite the fact that my son did NOT have a jury of his peers in Harford County....The Sentencing rested a lot on the testimony of the Ballistic Expert who had fraudulent Credentials. He later resigned and then Committed Suicide. Despite all of that the Judge still rendered a sentence that ended with the pronouncement of "**for the rest of your natural life**".

But it wasn't until my son sought God's forgiveness and the forgiveness and the forgiveness of all those that he knew was disappointed in him. He said that God's

mercy and God's love overtook him like nothing ever had before. From that point on, he was determined to make that mercy count. It was at that time that he knew that if the men in prison were going to survive successfully, they needed to know God's mercy in the same way he did.

It was God's mercy that turned my son around. He was clear that he did not deserve mercy, but when he read in his Bible that mercy is "undeserved favor," he began to understand. Who would give someone something so great knowing they don't deserve it? He said, "Only God, and my family."

From that day, he became fully committed to preparing men to return to society as all God "purposed" them to be, before they were incarcerated. Most of these men didn't even know they had worth, let alone purpose. My son became their teacher, both spiritually and practically. He taught them how to become men—fathers, husbands, and real sons to their parents. He showed them how to interview for jobs, how to present themselves to a world they hadn't been a part of for 20, 30, 40, even 50 years.

Most importantly, my son was ordained to lead a church of men who respected and trusted him enough to follow him. My son, Louis Hill III, did that.

He taught them to pray and believe that God Himself would "create a way" and send someone with a divine plan. That someone was State's Attorney Aisha Braveboy—a female "King Cyrus" (in the Bible) who not only had a plan, but had a heart. She was a believer in second chances.

But my son, their teacher and pastor, remains incarcerated, serving out his sentence of two life sentences without parole plus 80 years, while he waits for someone to give him a second look. In the meantime, he continues his work as an administrative clerk in the Tag Shop, preparing each new group of young men who enter the prison system—men who, too often, are condemned to die behind the walls.

I ask you: Does a man who has accomplished these things, whose prison adjustment records attest to his success with 32 years free of infractions, not deserve a second chance?

The Second Look Act (HB853) is not just about what someone did in the past, but about how they've changed. It's about how they sought forgiveness and rehabilitated themselves after decades of incarceration. A redeemed man should no longer be a condemned man.

This bill is about a personal soul-searching, about aligning our hearts with the principles of God—the true Judge of us all. Every one of our lives includes a "mercy clause." *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.* To receive mercy, we must be willing to give mercy—without conditions.

Mercy is a favor none of us deserves, yet God has made it available to all of us. This bill is not about the wrongs that were done, but about the changes that have taken place. It's about seeing the heart change in men and women who have spent decades in the "chambers of rehabilitation." The Bible calls this being "on the potter's wheel"—a process of being turned, pressed, beaten, and crushed, but now emerging as a different person.

The Second Look Act is as much for you as it is for those incarcerated. It shines a light on where we are in our faith, our hearts, and our relationship with God. We all need second chances—whether we've had them already or will need them before we leave this earth.

When you were at your lowest—when you made a mistake with a spouse, a child, or loved one—you begged for another chance. You begged them to see your change. When they refused, when they denied you that opportunity, your heart sank. You felt hopeless, helpless, and maybe even scared. You knew you couldn't undo what you did, but you hoped they could see the change in you.

Second chances are about witnessing the heart change in those who have spent years in rehabilitation. They are no longer the people they once were. They've endured the pain, the consequences, and have become something new.

This bill, HB853, gives you the opportunity to offer the same chance you would want for your children, your grandchildren, or even for yourself. It's about offering mercy to someone who has paid their dues and now only waits to grow old, sick, and die in prison.

If you can look up toward heaven and say your heart is okay with seeing someone who has changed suffer in prison for the rest of their life—after 20, 30, or 40 years—then that's between you and God. But if you can offer them another chance, then we take a step closer to the heart of God.

My son's name is Louis Hill III. He is not a monster; he is a man who has been redeemed.

Thank you for your time and consideration. For these reasons, I encourage you to vote **favorably** on the **Maryland Second Look Act HB853**.

Thank you,

Pastor Willie Mae Hill