



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND  
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

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**House Bill 853-Petition to Reduce Sentence: The Maryland Second Look Act  
Judiciary Committee – February 18, 2025  
SUPPORT**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)** for the 2025 legislative session. WDC is one of Maryland's largest and most active Democratic clubs with hundreds of politically active members, including many elected officials.

WDC urges the passage of **HB 853, Petition to Reduce Sentence: the Maryland Second Look Act**. This Act will allow a judicial review of a long sentence after the inmate has served at least 20 years.

**This bill will help Maryland families and children.** Each of the nearly [15,000 Marylanders](#) in our state prisons is also a parent, brother or sister, aunt or uncle, or grandparent. Thousands of Maryland families have endured long separations, and many thousands of Maryland children are growing up without their family elders. The Second Look Act will offer a chance for older family members who have been adequately rehabilitated while incarcerated to return to their families and communities.

**Maryland's current parole system does *not* ameliorate long sentences.** The parole board does not hold structured judicial hearings, as this Bill requires. The Parole Board simply has two of its members interview the prisoner alone with no other participants allowed, including no witness or attorney for the inmate. If an inmate with a life sentence is approved for parole, there is an additional waiting period of 2+ years for a thorough psychological study.

**The Second Look Act will help to correct some of the significant racial disparity in Maryland's criminal justice system.** After a minimum of 20 years served, and with a judicial finding of sufficient remorse and rehabilitation, some extremely long sentences can be reduced, sentences that have been imposed disproportionately on Black Marylanders.

Maryland ranks first in the nation in this measure of racial disparity. Our state leads the nation in its incarceration rate for Black inmates serving extremely long sentences. Of our state prison population serving extremely long sentences, [76% are Black Marylanders](#), from a [state population that is 32% Black](#). *Maryland's racial disparity in long sentencing exceeds that of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Georgia, states with a higher proportion of Black population.*

**We ask for your support for HB 853 and strongly urge a favorable Committee report.**

Tazeen Ahmad  
WDC President

Jane L. Harman  
WDC Criminal Justice  
Reform Subcommittee

Cynthia Rubenstein  
WDC Advocacy Chair