



## Testimony for the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

April 1, 2026

### HB 16 – Correctional Services – Maryland Parole Commission – Members and Hearing Examiners

#### FAVORABLE

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The ACLU of Maryland, the Center for Criminal Justice Reform at the University of Baltimore School of Law, and the Office of the Public Defender urge a favorable report on HB 16 as amended. In line with jointly proposed amendments offered in collaboration with the Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform and PREPARE, the current language of this bill serves as an important step toward more sound and efficient decisions for all parole candidates at every step of the process.

Our joint proposal focused on four primary revisions to the original language:

1. Striking amendments that eliminate hearing examiners, as losing their capacity would needlessly increase delays in the parole process.
2. Accounting for concerns with hearing examiner review by broadening the list of serious cases heard exclusively by commissioners to also include parole candidates serving 20+ year sentences.
3. Including the voices of incarcerated individuals and their loved ones among the nominating panel, as their perspectives are distinctly important in this context, and must be included.
4. Allowing hearing examiners to temporarily fill empty commissioner seats, which would help avoid vacancy-related delays.

As these changes are adequately reflected in the bill's revisions, we support HB 16 and its improvements to the commissioner appointment and hearing process. However, we still maintain a continuing concern with the commission voting process specifically for those with life sentences (and updated by this bill) - people released after serving life are among those with the lowest rate of potential recidivism and do not need to be subjected to a different parole process than other candidates.

Nevertheless, as this bill still brings Maryland closer to greater equity in parole consideration overall, the ACLU of Maryland, the Center for Criminal Justice Reform at the University of Baltimore School of Law, and the Office of the Public Defender urge a favorable report on HB 16 as amended.

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