

HB 16 _ SB 823 Summary.pdf

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A Deeper Dive Into Maryland's HB 16 / SB 823

Overview of House Bill 16 and Senate Bill 823's changes to parole commissioner appointments and the creation of a selection committee.

Overview

[House Bill 16](#) / [Senate Bill 823](#) will change the appointing authority and process for the selection of parole commissioners. House Bill 16 will also adjust Commission staffing and ensure parole commissioners conduct all parole hearings.

Comparing Parole Appointment Across the US

Currently in Maryland, the Secretary of DPSCS appoints **10 commissioners** (with the approval of the Governor and the advice and consent of the Senate) and an **unlimited number of hearing examiners** (that do not require approval or consent of other governing bodies) to conduct parole hearings.

In most states, the Governor has the sole authority to select and appoint parole commissioners (i.e. parole board members), often with Senate advice and consent. In all but four states, the Governor appoints at least *part* of the Parole Commission. Listed below are the exceptions to the rule:

Secretary of Corrections | Maryland, Kansas

Maryland is an outlier – it's one of two states (Kansas, [Kan. Stat. § 75-52.152](#)) that permits the Secretary of Corrections to appoint parole commissioners.

Director, Department of Corrections | Michigan, Ohio

Michigan's Director appoints members with no approval or oversight from any other elected position or governing body ([Mich. Comp. Laws § 791.231a](#)). Ohio generally does not require any approval ([Ohio Rev. Code § 5149.02](#)) except one of their members has to be a victim / family of a victim who is chosen "in consultation with the governor" ([Ohio Rev. Code § 5149.10](#)). No other oversight is required by law.

Combination | Oklahoma, South Dakota, Wisconsin

Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Wisconsin divide their appointment duties across multiple positions.

- Oklahoma | [Oklahoma Constitution, Article VI, Section 10](#)
 - 3 members appointed by Governor
 - 1 member appointed by the Chief Justice of Supreme Court
 - 1 member appointed by the Presiding Judge of Court of Appeals
- South Dakota | [S.D. Codified Laws § 24-13-1](#)
 - 3 members appointed by the Governor
 - 3 members appointed by the Attorney General
 - 3 members appointed by the Supreme Court
- Wisconsin | [Wis. Stat. § 15.145](#)
 - The Governor appoints the Chair. The Chair appoints the other three members.

Appointment Panels

Six states utilize parole panels to screen applicants and submit candidates to the Governor to choose from to select their appointee. HB 16 / SB 823 would make Maryland the seventh.

- Alabama | [Ala. Code § 15-22-20](#)
 - 3 member panel
- Florida | [Fla. Stat. § 947.02](#)
 - 5 member panel
- Hawaii | [Haw. Rev. Stat. § 353-61](#)
 - 6 member panel
- Kentucky | [Ky. Rev. Stat. § 196.701](#)
 - 23 member panel
- Massachusetts | [Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 27 § 4](#)
 - 9 member panel
- Utah | [Utah Code § 63M-7-202](#)
 - 17 member panel

Commissioner Qualifications

Training and experience qualifications for parole commissioners are unchanged by this bill.

[Md. Code. Corr. Servs. § 7-202](#) specifies that:

(b) Each commissioner shall:

- (1) be appointed without regard to political affiliation;
- (2) be a resident of the State; and
- (3) have training and experience in law, sociology, psychology, psychiatry, education, social work, or criminology.

Commissioner Salary

Parole commissioners are full-time, salaried employees. According to a [records request](#) submitted to the Maryland Comptroller, parole commissioners make between \$117k (commissioners) and \$132k (Commission Chair) per year.

Currently, there are 10 hearing examiners who make an average of \$99k per year. It is the intent of HB 16 that the hearing examiner salaries will be re-budgeted for the expanded Parole Commission.

From lines 30-32 (page 9) of the bill:

“SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That it is the intent of the General Assembly that any funds budgeted for hearing examiner salaries as of the effective date of this Act be re-budgeted for parole commissioner salaries.”

Hearing Examiners Background.pdf

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Position: FAV

Maryland Hearing Examiners

Profile & Structural Analysis

Introduction

Campaign Zero has compiled the names, salaries, and publicly available career backgrounds of all current Maryland hearing examiners as of January 31, 2025. The names of hearing examiners are not made public on any Maryland government website and were collected through a [MPIA request](#).

Current Hearing Examiners

All names as of January 31, 2025. Salaries are from [Maryland Comptroller public records](#). Backgrounds researched via Comptroller salary history, LinkedIn, ZoomInfo, state government archives, and DPSCS public records.

| Name | Salary | Known Career Background | Source | Former DPSCS Y/N |
|------------------|-----------|---|--|--|
| G*** C*** | \$73,000 | Acting Exec. Director, Commission on Correctional Standards (2008); Compliance, Police Training & Standards Commission (2023) | MD Manual 2008; PTSC Meeting Minutes July 2023 | Yes — DPSCS |
| M** C***** | \$89,000 | Division of Correction — Case Management Specialist II (2003–2012) | DPSCS records; LinkedIn. | Yes — DPSCS |
| S***** G***** | \$99,000 | Drinking Driver Monitor Program (DDMP) Supervisor; Probation Supervisor | DPSCS records; DBM contract site list confirms DDMP role | Yes — DPSCS |
| C***** H**** | \$90,000 | Correctional Officer, DE DOC Bureau of Prisons (2006–2013); Family Services Coord., DE DOC (2013–2014); Community Relations, DE DOC (2014–2017); Probation Parole Officer, DE DOC (2017–2022). M.Ed, Wilmington Univ. | LinkedIn. 16 yrs corrections. | Yes — DOC (DE) |
| S** K***** | \$105,000 | Correctional Case Management Specialist | DPSCS records | Yes — DPSCS |
| C***** N***** | \$108,000 | Hearing Examiner since 1993 (30+ yrs). B.A.Sc., Morgan State University. | ZoomInfo; Comptroller salary history | Yes — DPSCS |
| J*** N***** | \$106,000 | No publicly available prior experience found | Searched: Comptroller, LinkedIn, Google, ZoomInfo — no results | No publicly available work history. |
| K** R***** | \$105,000 | DPSCS Recruitment department (2019–present) | Comptroller salary records (openthebooks.com) | Yes — DPSCS |
| R***** W***** | \$110,000 | Supervisory Probation Officer | DPSCS records. LinkedIn inconclusive — name too common. | Yes — DPSCS |
| T**** W***** | \$112,000 | No publicly available prior experience found | Searched: Comptroller, LinkedIn, Google, ZoomInfo — no results | No publicly available work history. |

Overview and Findings

Appointment Process

- Ten Parole Commission members are appointed by the Secretary of Corrections, with the approval of the Governor and the advice and consent of the Senate

MD. CODE, CORR. SERVS. §7-202

- Hearing Examiners are appointed by the Secretary of Corrections alone. There is no limit to the number of examiners (by law, the Secretary appoints as many as are “necessary to conduct parole release hearings.”)

MD. CODE, CORR. SERVS. §7-204

Career Background

- **Every hearing examiner** with a traceable background comes from corrections, probation, or a DPSCS-adjacent role.
- **No hearing examiner** has an identifiable background in community-based programming, criminal defense, civil rights, social work, mental health, or reentry.
- 2 out of 10 hearing examiners have no publicly verifiable prior experience at all.
- One hearing examiner held this role (and made parole release recommendations) for over 30 years with no term limit and no public accountability review. He retired in June 2025.

Salary

- Hearing examiners make an average salary of \$99k, with six examiners making over \$100k.
- All parole commissioners make \$117k (except for the Chair, \$132k).

SOURCE: MPIA REQUEST

Sources

Maryland Correctional Services Code

Md. Code, Corr. Servs. §7-202 (Parole Commission composition)

Md. Code, Corr. Servs. §7-204 (Hearing examiner authority and appointment)

Md. Code, Corr. Servs. §7-205 (Commissioner hearings for homicide/life sentences)

Md. Code, Corr. Servs. §7-306 (Hearing examiner procedures)

mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgaweb/Laws/Statutes

Parole FAQs.pdf

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Position: FAV

Understanding **HB16/SB 823 & HB 467/SB 822**

Improvements in Transparency and Equity

Campaign Zero has conducted a rigorous 50 state review of parole statutes, state code, and administrative regulations across a variety of policy areas. We commend the sponsors for these common-sense updates intended to bring Maryland up to date with parole practices across the country.

GENERAL FAQs

1 Is parole a reduction in sentence?

No, parole does not reduce any person's sentence. If released on parole, people remain in legal custody and still serve their "full, undiminished term" on community supervision.

[MD. CODE, CORR. SERVS. § 7-308.](#)

2 Will this bill grant parole to more people?

This bill does not change parole eligibility laws or the Parole Commission's ability to grant parole. The Parole Commission will retain full discretionary authority for parole release decisions. Generally, in order to be eligible for a parole hearing, people have to serve at least 25% of their sentence for a non-violent offense or 50% of their sentence for a violent offense.

The proposed updates address existing procedures for eligible people to bring Maryland up-to-par with national standards. *These proposals would provide hearings to people who are already eligible—they do not affect any eligibility laws and do not result in automatic release.*

[MD. CODE, CORR. SERVS. § 7-301](#)

3 What's the difference between a parole hearing and a parole decision?

A parole hearing is an opportunity for the incarcerated person to be reviewed by the Commission through an interview with a hearing examiner or a panel of parole commissioners. A parole decision occurs after a hearing and determines whether the person may be released on parole or will remain in prison.

4 Does a parole hearing guarantee release?

No. A parole hearing is available to all incarcerated people who have been deemed eligible for parole. *Parole eligibility does not guarantee release, only consideration.* The Commission utilizes parole hearings to determine whether or not someone is ready to return to the community.

Apart from life without parole (LWOP) sentences, all incarcerated people will return home some day. The Commission decides if they're best suited to transition home under parole supervision or max out their sentence in prison

AUTOMATIC SCHEDULING

5 Chair Eley says the Parole Commission has not denied a single request for a parole hearing under his leadership.

Why is this bill still necessary?

Chair Eley's commitment to giving every eligible person a hearing (since his appointment as Chair in 2025) is important, but there will be a day when he steps down and a new person is appointed Chair of the Parole Commission. Administrative changes come and go when new people attain leadership positions, while legislative changes are structural and long-lasting. All structural elements governing the Parole Commission's function should be fair regardless of the Chair. We must ensure state law requires parole hearings for each parole-eligible person and does not rely on the discretion of an appointed position.

6 Is Maryland an outlier requiring people to request a parole hearing?

The vast majority of US states automatically schedule subsequent parole hearings following a denial. Maryland is one of five states that requires a person to apply for a parole hearing (along with Delaware, Idaho, Pennsylvania and Utah). *Requiring a parole-eligible person to request a hearing gives the Parole Commission undue power over their sentence, allowing them to overrule other branches of government.*

In a balanced system, the legislature determines the appropriate punishment and parole eligibility, the courts determine guilt or innocence, and the Parole Commission determines the person's fitness to return home after a specified portion of their sentence. *Maryland's current set-up allows the Commission to deny a hearing, effectively stripping parole eligibility from incarcerated people.*

7 Is it true people convicted of murder will get out sooner if these proposals are passed?

First degree murder maintains a sentence option of life without parole if the prosecutor decides to pursue it. None of these proposals affect people convicted of particularly egregious examples of first-degree murder since they are not eligible for parole.

[MD. CODE, CRIM. LAW § 2-201](#)

[MD. CODE, CRIM. LAW § 2-203](#)

HEARING EXAMINERS

8 What's the difference between a commissioner and a hearing examiner?

State law establishes ten parole commissioners, appointed by the Secretary with the approval of the Governor and the advice and consent of the Senate whose primary responsibility is parole determinations. However, the DPSCS Secretary also appoints—with as many hearing examiners as are required to conduct parole hearings. These hearing examiners have no required review for experience or competency to make parole decisions.

Although they are not appointed parole commissioners, hearing examiners conduct parole hearings alone and make a recommended decision, submitted to the Commission. If the Commission does not file an exception to their decision within five days, the decision of the hearing examiner is final. In short, hand-selected staff members are making decisions about people's freedom without any review.

[MD. CODE, CORR. SERVS. § 7-202](#)

[MD. CODE, CORR. SERVS. § 7-204](#)

9 Which people have their hearings with a commissioner and who has one with a hearing examiner?

Generally, the appointed commissioners are only required by law to conduct parole hearings for those with a life sentence or who have been convicted of homicide. All other parole hearings are conducted by a hearing examiner.

Of the ~15,000 incarcerated people currently eligible for parole, OVER HALF (~9,000) will have a hearing with a hearing examiner. The majority of people will never meet with a parole commissioner.

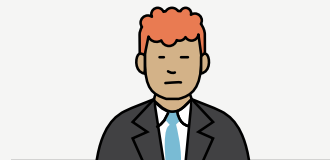
[MD. CODE, CORR. SERVS. § 7-204](#)

[MD. CODE, CORR. SERVS. § 7-205](#)

[FIGURE 1]

Parole Commission vs. Hearing Examiner

The majority of the 15,000 people currently eligible for parole in Maryland will never meet with the parole commission.



Parole Commission

6,000 currently eligible people will have their hearing decided by a commissioner

- 10 appointees, determined by DPSCS secretary with input/approval from the Senate and governor
- Conduct hearings for murder/life sentences
- Hear cases as a panel of two (may hear other case types alone, acting as a hearing examiner)

Hearing Examiner

The remaining 9,000 currently eligible people will have their hearing decided by a single hearing examiner

- Unlimited hires, chosen directly by DPSCS Secretary, without input from the governor or the Senate
- Conduct all hearings other than murder/life sentences
- Conduct parole hearings alone



PER MD. CODE, CORR. SERVS. § 7-205 and current DPSCS incarcerated population data, the majority of eligible people will never meet with a parole commissioner.



HB 16 would increase the size of the commission and require actual parole commissioners to conduct all parole hearings.

VICTIM IMPACT

10 What are the current options for victims to participate in the parole process?

None of the proposals change the robust range of options available to victims in the parole process. All parties favor a fair, just, and transparent process.

Victims may:

- Submit a notification form if they wish to be notified of parole hearings and release decisions.
- Submit a victim impact statement, their recommendation on advisability of parole release, and request a meeting with a commissioner
- Request an open hearing at which they may attend and speak.

Current state law requires the Parole Commission to consider an updated victim impact statement or recommendation prepared under MD. CODE, CORR. SERVS. § 7-801. HB 467/SB 822 would expand this consideration to include any original or subsequently filed victim impact statement or recommendation.

[MD. CODE, CORR. SERVS. § 7-304](#)

[MD. CODE, CORR. SERVS. § 7-305](#)

[MD. CODE, CORR. SERVS. § 7-801](#)

[MD. CODE, CRIM. PROC. § 11-104](#)

11 How many victims request to attend parole hearings?

By default, hearings in Maryland are closed to the public (including victims). The state does not force victims to attend and speak, an open hearing only occurs upon their request. According to the Parole Commission's annual reports, 1% of parole hearings have had a victim request to attend each of the last two years.

a. [FY2023](#): 62 of 5,803 hearings were open

b. [FY2024](#): 56 of 5,931 hearings were open

12 Will either of these bills limit the existing ability of victims to be heard or represented in the parole process?

HB 467/SB 822 expands the number of victim impact statements that the Parole Commission must consider before deciding whether to grant or deny parole.

Current state law requires the Parole Commission to consider an updated victim impact statement prepared under MD. CODE, CORR. SERVS. § 7-801. HB 467/SB 822 would expand this consideration to include *any* original or subsequently filed victim impact statement or recommendation.

Neither bill restricts or reduces victim input.

[MD. CODE, CORR. SERVS. § 7-305](#)

Parole Process Map 822 823.pdf

Uploaded by: DeRay Mckesson

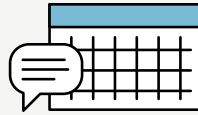
Position: FAV

HB 16/SB 823 & HB 467/SB 822 would update the current Maryland parole process to improve transparency and equity in each of the areas identified below.



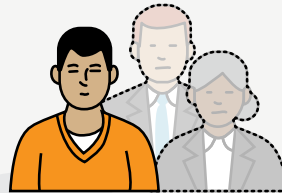
1 Eligibility¹

Incarcerated people become parole-eligible after serving:
25% of a non-violent offense
50% of a violent offense



2 Scheduling²

The Parole Commission schedules hearings as people become eligible.



3 Hearing*

Hearings are conducted by a single hearing examiner (most common), by a commissioner (acting as a hearing examiner) or by a panel (two commissioners), based on the offense.



4 Parole Decision

Individuals receive a decision within 21 days (hearing examiner) or within 30 days (commissioner).



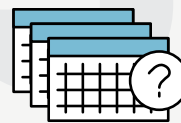
GRANTED

The person is released and remains on parole until the end of their maximum sentence.



DENIED

The person remains in prison until they are permitted to apply for another hearing.



5 Rehearing

Incarcerated people must *apply* for subsequent hearings—the Commission has full discretion to refuse those requests regardless of parole eligibility.



Individuals may have as little as 15 days notice and must *request* to review their documents.



HB 467 / SB 822 would make documents automatically available for review.



Current law doesn't require subsequent hearings or establish a timeline.



HB 467 / SB 822 would establish a set schedule for subsequent parole hearings

* FIGURE 1 (P. 1) EXPLAINS ISSUES WITH HOW PAROLE COMMISSIONERS AND HEARING EXAMINERS ARE APPOINTED AND UTILIZED.

FIGURE 3 (P. 3) DESCRIBES IN DETAIL HOW MOST HEARINGS ARE DECIDED BY A SINGLE INDIVIDUAL RATHER THAN A PANEL.



Commissioners / Hearing Examiners are not required to give reasoning or justification for parole decisions.



HB 467 / SB 822 would require the decision and justification to be given to the incarcerated person within 14 days .



The Commission issued hearing *refusals* to over a thousand eligible people in both FY23/ FY 24, including hundreds with non-violent offenses.



HB 467 / SB 822 would require subsequent hearings to be automatically scheduled every 2, 3, or 5 years, depending on the person's length of sentence and incarcerating offense.

1. Md. Code, Corr. Servs. § 7-301

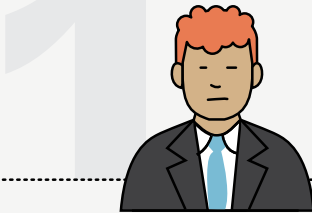
2. According to a records request to DPSCS, people may apply for a subsequent hearing every year (if serving <10 years) or every two years (if serving >10 years).

Most people's hearings are conducted by a **single person** who is *not* an appointed commissioner.³



HB 16 would increase the size of the commission and require all parole hearings to be conducted by commissioners.

MOST COMMON



The majority of parole hearings are held by a **single Hearing Examiner**, or by a commissioner acting as a hearing examiner.



Approximately 9,000 parole eligible people will have a hearing with only one person. The hearing examiner submits their report to the Commission. If the Commission does not file an exception (appeal), the recommendation becomes the final decision.

LESS COMMON (CERTAIN OFFENSES)



For certain offenses, such as homicide or for parole-eligible life sentences, hearings are conducted by a panel of at least **two Commissioners**.



Approximately 6,000 people serving sentences for homicide or parole-eligible life sentences will have a panel hearing with at least two commissioners. A unanimous decision of two commissioners is required. If the two do not agree, a new panel of three commissioners is formed to rehear the case. The majority vote of the three is the decision.

RARE UNDER CURRENT LAW



Only those convicted of a crime post-October 2021 and given a parole-eligible life sentence have a hearing before the **full Commission**.



A grant requires the affirmative vote of six commissioners — there are currently only seven. There are few, if any, individuals impacted by this provision that are currently parole eligible.

3. Md. Code, Corr. Servs. § 7-304, Md. Code, Corr. Servs. § 7-306, Md. Code, Corr. Servs. § 7-307



SB0823 - Correctional Services - Maryland Parole C

Uploaded by: Anne Pack

Position: FWA



PREPARE
PREpare for PARole and REentry

Anne Bocchini Pack
Co-Founder and Director of Advocacy, PREPARE

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(410) 994-6136

SB0823 - Correctional Services - Maryland Parole Commission - Members - FWA

I am a formerly incarcerated parole advocate who co-founded PREPARE while incarcerated at MCIW. I have been assisting individuals in the parole process since 2017, and PREPARE has served over 2,000 parole-eligible Marylanders with education and support in the parole and reentry process since our incorporation in 2021. I have participated in numerous collaborative workgroups since my release in 2022, including the MEJC Parole and Decarceration subcommittee which produced two of the three recommendations included under Prisons, Jails and Detention centers in the MEJC report. More importantly, two years of the collaborative process led us to greater understanding of the administrative functions within the parole system and what it will take to make the system function more efficiently.

From 2023-2025 the Parole Commission was significantly understaffed, with some seats remaining unfilled for up to 2 years and the number of Commissioners dwindling from 10 to 6. During this time, the Secretary chose not to exercise her authority to appoint Hearing Examiners to the empty Commission spots. This has now been remedied and the Parole Commission is staffed and functioning normally, but the danger is clear for those with life sentences for crimes committed on or after October 1, 2021. These individuals need a 6 votes for release rather than a simple majority of the Commissioners on the en banc panel, so an understaffed Commission can bring their parole process to a halt. While this group is not yet parole eligible, if the appointment process is not stable before they are, we could usher in a new “life means life” era.

I appreciate that SB0823 makes an attempt to address this issue, but as written it would actually exacerbate the problem by further slowing an already sluggish process. In response a coalition of workgroup members, practitioners and advocates developed some alternative recommendations. First and most importantly, we propose the addition of a statutory guardrail - a requirement that the Secretary must use the authority to appoint a Hearing Examiner as an Interim Commissioner after 30 days to prevent Commission vacancies. This alone would stabilize the appointment system, however if a panel is to be used for Commission appointments, we recommend that members be intentionally chosen for their expertise and include lived experience. We request the “general public” spots be removed and replaced with formerly incarcerated people and families. I have attached the joint recommendations of our workgroup for your review and urge that the amendments relevant to SB0823 be adopted prior to a favorable report.

PO Box 9738, Towson, MD 21284

HB16/SB823 (Parole Commission Appointments) **Primary Concerns & Proposed Amendments**

Concern No. 1: Eliminating the role of hearing examiners under HB16 would needlessly increase delays in the parole process.

- **Proposed Amendments:**

1. Remove all amendments in HB16 that strike language providing for hearing examiners.
2. To account for concerns with review conducted by hearing examiners, broaden the list of serious cases heard exclusively by commissioners to include parole candidates serving 20+ year sentences by amending Section 7-205(a)(iii) beginning on page 5, line 4, as follows in red:

(iii) the incarcerated individual is serving a sentence of life imprisonment **OR A NON-AGGREGATED TERM OF CONFINEMENT OF AT LEAST 20 YEARS;**

Concern No. 2: Among concerns with the relevance of certain nominees provided as potential appointees to the Commission, the current list lacks the distinct and important perspectives of formerly incarcerated individuals and their loved ones.

- **Proposed Amendment** - Amend Section 7-202(a)(2)(l)(7) beginning on page 2, line 19, as follows in red:

7. THREE MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC, APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR, WHICH SHALL INCLUDE ONE MARYLAND RESIDENT FORMERLY INCARCERATED IN MARYLAND CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION FOR WOMEN, ONE MARYLAND RESIDENT FORMERLY INCARCERATED IN ANY MARYLAND PRISON, AND ONE MARYLAND RESIDENT WHO IS THE IMMEDIATE RELATIVE OF A FORMERLY OR CURRENTLY INCARCERATED INDIVIDUAL.

Concern No. 3: Allowing hearing examiners to temporarily fill empty commissioner seats would help mitigate vacancy-related delays that are likely to increase once the new appointment process under this bill takes effect.

- **Proposed Amendment** – Remove amendment striking Section 7-202(f) and amend the language of 7-202(f)(1) beginning on page 3, line 21, as follows in red:

(f) (1) If **A VACANCY EXISTS ON THE COMMISSION OR** a commissioner is unable to perform the commissioner's duties because of sickness, incapacity, or disqualification, the Secretary [may] **SHALL** appoint a hearing examiner **WITHIN 30 DAYS** to the Commission to perform those duties until that commissioner is able to resume those duties or until a new commissioner is appointed and qualifies.

SB823_FWA_ACLUMD & UBLAW_JPR.pdf

Uploaded by: Dara Johnson

Position: FWA



**Testimony for the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 25, 2026**

**SB 823 – Correctional Services – Maryland Parole Commission
– Members and Hearing Examiners**

FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

DARA JOHNSON

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GENERAL COUNSEL

The ACLU of Maryland and the Center for Criminal Justice Reform at the University of Baltimore School of Law support SB 823 with the amendments outlined in our attached joint proposal. These amendments reference both this bill and similar provisions offered under HB16, and are offered in collaboration with the Office of the Public Defender, the Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform, and PREPARE.

The amendment relevant to the current language of SB 823 is summarized in the attached proposal under concern no. 2, which seeks to include the voices of incarcerated individuals and their loved ones among potential nominees for commission appointment. Including their distinct perspectives is key to ensuring the decisions of potential commissioners meaningfully account for those most directly impacted.

We are also seeking an additional amendment under SB 823 that modifies Correctional Services Article Section 7-202(f)(1) to allow hearing examiners to temporarily fill empty commissioner seats to avoid vacancy-related delays (as outlined under concern no. 3 in the attached proposal). As implementing the appointment process proposed by this bill will likely increase the delays in parole consideration that often arise when the Commission lacks a full panel, this change will help fill those gaps and support timely decisionmaking.

With these changes, we are hopeful that SB 823 can serve as an important step toward more sound and efficient decisions for all parole candidates at every step of the process. Accordingly, the ACLU of Maryland and the Center for Criminal Justice Reform at the University of Baltimore School of Law urge a favorable report on SB 823 if amended.

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O. Moyd SB 823 MPC Appointment .pdf

Uploaded by: Olinda Moyd, Esquire

Position: FWA

Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform

Working together for a criminal justice system that better serves our communities



Senate Bill 823
Favorable with Amendments
Judicial Proceedings Committee
Submitted by Olinda Moyd

Chair and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of The Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR), an all-volunteer, non-partisan organization with 2,000 members statewide, we urge your favorable report on Senate Bill 823, with the proposed amendment.

We support the proposal that would reform the appointment process for commissioners to the Maryland Parole Commission. The creation of a nominating panel representing broad interests across the state will enhance the likelihood that these important decision-makers will better reflect the communities that they serve. The Maryland Parole Commission is charged with determining on a case-by-case basis whether incarcerated individuals are suitable for release into the community. According to their most recent, publicly available annual report, they hear approximately 6,000 cases per year for people confined in our state prisons and local detention centers.¹ They bear the grave responsibility of balancing public safety with the restoration of deserving individuals back to their families and communities.

The Maryland Parole Commission, like most parole boards, plays a critical role in determining who is ready to reenter society after incarceration. When these boards reflect the diversity and values of the communities they serve, their decisions are more likely to be fair, equitable, and informed by a broad range of perspectives. Community representation ensures that decisions consider the unique needs, concerns, and experiences of the state. A broad nominating panel can ensure that the commissioners represent diverse groups and perspectives and can help build trust between the justice system and the community, fostering transparency and accountability. This inclusiveness also encourages policies and practices that are responsive to social realities, leading to better outcomes for both individuals seeking parole and the wider community. When commissioner appointments are purely political and heavily weighted with former law enforcement

¹ The Maryland Parole Commission, Fiscal Year 2024 Annual Report. [Microsoft Word - Annual Report FY 2024 Maryland Parole Commission.docx](#).

personnel, their decisions can be skewed. It is important that decision makers understand the neighborhood patterns, lifestyle traditions, and cultural norms that people bring with them into the hearing room in order to avoid racial inequities and control inherent biases.²

Proposed Amendment:

8. [THREE MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR]

8. THREE MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC, WHICH SHALL INCLUDE ONE MARYLAND RESIDENT FORMERLY INCARCERATED IN THE MARYLAND CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION FOR WOMEN, ONE MARYLAND RESIDENT FORMERLY INCARCERATED IN ANY MARYLAND PRISON, AND ONE MARYLAND RESIDENT WHO IS THE IMMEDIATE RELATIVE OF A FORMERLY OR CURRENTLY INCARCERATED INDIVIDUAL.

The current list lacks the important perspective of formerly incarcerated individuals and their loved ones. Including formerly incarcerated people on the nominating panel is crucial because they bring firsthand experience and unique perspectives on correctional operations and how the parole system operates in reality. Their insight can help identify gaps and challenges that may not be visible to other members of the nominating panel. Additionally, their participation promotes fairness, amplifies marginalized voices, and fosters trust within communities impacted by the justice system.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report with the proposed amendment.

Olinda Moyd
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² *Racial Disparities Inherent in American's Fragmented Parole System*, by Olinda Moyd, American Bar Association, Criminal Justice Magazine, Spring 2021. [Racial Disparities Inherent in America's Fragmented Parole System](#).

SB0823 - Gordon Pack - 2.23.26.pdf

Uploaded by: Gordon Pack, Jr.

Position: UNF

Gordon Pack

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SB 0823 – Correctional Services – Maryland Parole Commission - Members Incarcerated Adults – Unfavorable at this time – February 23, 2026

Dear Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

In addition to being a formerly incarcerated Lifer with parole appearances before the Patuxent Board of Review and the MD Parole Commission in the double digits, I am a Parole Advocate and the former chair of the Decarceration and Parole Subcommittee of the sunseting Maryland Equitable Justice Collaborative (MEJC). I have continued to meet diverse stakeholders and make collaborative recommendations to improve MD's parole scheme as I was onboarded to the Maryland Justice Partnership.

While I applaud the legislature's recent interest in our State's parole scheme and the Chair's interest in Commissioner appointments, I believe SB0823, falls short and can create bigger problems for Marylanders in the years to come which reflects limited collaborative discussion of stakeholders. For the majority of the Commission's existence, it has been primarily composed of white, male, former law enforcement representatives with no term limits. Recognizing the lack of diversity of the Commission in an ever-evolving system, the Moore Administration redressed this issue by appointing commissioners from diverse disciplines and backgrounds.

While this has resulted in a more balanced Commission, the apparent lack of consideration to actual job performances of those not reappointed impacted morale. None opted to stay onboard as legislation provides until replacements were found. One retired before his term expired. For over two years, the Commission was understaffed until an influx of replacements were hired.

Additionally, it would seem that the five newly appointed commissioners around the same time detracted from the overburdened duties of the current commissioners. I would think this would be reflected in parole and revocation outcomes. Another frightening reality is that in the next 4-5 years, a new administration can repeat a similar cycle.

The legislated actions of this Bill do nothing to keep the Parole Commission full and functioning which directly impacts outcomes. It may even result in a longer process for appointments. Time and discussion are needed to include options of retention, reappointment, replacement, and advancement of hearing officers to fill interim vacancies.

Thus, I urge this honorable committee to vote unfavorably for SB0823 at this time.

Sincerely yours,

/s/Gordon R. Pack

HB 823 - unfavorable.pdf

Uploaded by: Kirsten Brown

Position: UNF

Ivan Bates
President



Kirsten N. Brown
Executive Director

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Date: February 23, 2026

Bill Number: Senate Bill 823

Position: Unfavorable

LETTER IN OPPOSITION TO SENATE BILL 823

The Maryland State's Attorney's Association (MSAA) urges an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 823.

Senate Bill 823 would create a nominating panel for parole commissioners. Under current law, the Secretary of Public Safety and Correctional Services selects parole commissioners, requiring the approval of the Governor and the consent of the Senate.

Mandatory release occurs when an inmate obtains enough earned credits, such as diminution credits or work credits, to mandate a statutory release from commitment. Unlike mandatory release, parole in Maryland is an earned release based on demonstrated institutional adjustment as determined by the Maryland Parole Commission.

Crime victims and their families are impacted significantly during the parole process. It is often difficult for crime victims to understand why or how an offender will be released back into the community before serving the full sentence imposed. Crime victims deserve to have a prominent voice in the parole process.

If a nominating panel is to be created, it is critical to strike a balance of panel members with experience in managing violent offenders, assessing public safety risk, and victims' rights representatives. SB 823 does not. Instead, SB 823 proposes a panel of advocates, members of the public and others who may not have any particularized experience in the complexities of managing violent offenders, assessing public safety risks. This will inevitably be to the detriment of victims and their families who are relying on the system to continue to duly hold accountable criminal offenders justly sentenced in court.

For the above reasons, MSAA urges an unfavorable report on SB823.

SB823 Itr.pdf

Uploaded by: Kurt Wolfgang

Position: UNF



Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc.

Continuing the Missions of the Stephanie Roper Committee and Foundation, Inc.

☎ 877-VICTIM-1 (877-842-8461) ✉ mail@mdcrimevictims.org 🌐 mdcrimevictims.org

LETTER IN OPPOSITION TO SENATE BILL 823

February 23, 2026

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The Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center (MCVRC) urges an unfavorable vote on SB823.

Senate Bill 823 would shift full appointment authority for the Maryland Parole Commission to the Governor. Under current law, the Secretary of Public Safety and Correctional Services selects the parole commissioners, requiring the approval of the Governor and the consent of the Senate. SB823 instead forms a new 14-member panel that will suggest candidates to the Governor.

The proposed 14-member nominating panel is neither composed of experts in criminal behavior and recidivism nor balanced between differing philosophies of punishment and public safety. Under current law, parole commissioners are selected by the Secretary of Public Safety and Correctional Services; under SB 823, the Parole Commission would instead be effectively handpicked by the Governor. Of the 14 panel members, ten are directly chosen by the Governor, either through SB 823 itself or by virtue of their gubernatorial appointments to state positions. Only four are not gubernatorial selections, specifically the President of the National Association of Social Workers, the President of the Maryland State's Attorneys' Association, the State Superintendent, and the Executive Director of the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission. The proposed panel is heavily weighted toward social workers, treatment providers, and community organizers, and lacks a focus on public safety. Most of these members are unlikely to have had substantial responsibility for enforcing criminal laws, managing violent offenders, or directly protecting the public. Because they are not required to have experience with violent offenders who must be separated from the community, they lack the background needed to nominate parole commissioners who can reliably safeguard crime victims and the public. As a result, the bill would likely politicize and destabilize the appointment process, inviting contentious advocacy and lobbying from individuals with limited experience in penology who favor across-the-board sentence reductions and who may seek to reshape or obstruct the Commission's proper functioning for ideological reasons.

The bill's specific panel composition underscores this concern. It includes representatives from the Office of the Public Defender and prisoners' rights organizations that have repeatedly opposed and sued the Parole Commission, pursued resentencing mechanisms to bypass the parole process, and promoted non-parole avenues to accelerate releases from state correctional institutions. These are stakeholders whose stated objectives are often directly at odds with the regular operation and even the continued existence of the Parole Commission. Entrusting opponents of an agency's mission with a central role in selecting its most impactful leaders is unsound public policy.

Perhaps most telling of the bias in the nominating panel is that it only includes one token representative for crime victims to reflect the interests of those people who bear the greatest trauma from violent crime and parole decisions. If this were a serious effort to structure a Parole Commission dedicated to public safety and a fair justice system for all parties, at least half of the panel's membership would consist of victim representatives and the other half of professionals with expertise in criminal justice, parole and probation, public safety, and victimization. Packing the panel with social work and treatment-focused individuals, contravenes crime victims' constitutional right under Article 47(a) of the Maryland Declaration of Rights to be treated by all agents of the State with dignity, respect, and sensitivity at every stage of the criminal justice process. For these reasons, Senate Bil 823 is unconstitutional and should not be supported. Crime victims are profoundly affected by the decisions of the Parole Commission. Senate Bill 823's token crime victim representative on the 14-person panel is a mere disrespectful glance in the direction of crime victims; it is not a serious role in the parole process. SB 823 does not make an effort to treat victims of crime with dignity, respect or sensitivity, and should not be supported.

The Parole Commission makes vital decisions about releasing individuals convicted of the most serious offenses—people serving lengthy sentences imposed by judges and upheld through layers of appellate review. Maryland cannot allow its Parole Commission to be stacked with political appointees lacking the decades of experience required to work effectively in this role. Ignoring the primary role of public safety and the need for meaningful victim involvement in the parole process is disrespectful and recklessly disregards the real dangers involved in parole decisions.

For the above reasons, we urge an unfavorable vote on SB 823.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victor D. Stone". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Victor D. Stone, Appellate Division Chief
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Joined by: Joanna Mupanduki, Deputy Director & Kurt Wolfgang, Executive Director