

House Bill 759 (Criminal Procedure – Motion to Reduce Duration of Sentence – Repeal of Sentencing Date Limitation)
House Judiciary Committee
Hearing Date: February 17, 2026

Position: FAVORABLE

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

I, Serena Lao, am submitting this testimony in support of HB 759. My loved one was incarcerated for 37 years in Maryland prisons for a crime committed at the age of 16. The Juvenile Restoration Act (JRA) gave him and many others incredible hope when it passed in 2021, and every child who has spent at least 20 years incarcerated should have that same opportunity for a sentence *review* regardless of when they were sentenced.

This bill is a simple fix to legislation that is currently inconsistent and unfair. Right now, if a 15 year-old and a 24 year-old were arrested as co-defendants in a serious crime, the 24 year-old would be eligible for sentence review after 20 years, while the child would not be. We know that there is plenty of research on brain development showing that young minds have the greatest capacity to develop and change. This is true of a child that was sentenced before October 1, 2021, and it is still true of a child sentenced on or after October 1, 2021. Repealing this sentencing date limitation would serve as a beacon of hope for those who, right now, are making choices during their incarceration to act out in hopelessness or commit themselves to a better path and work towards the possibility of a second chance one day.

Our communities have seen the positive impact of those who were granted a second chance through the JRA. So many returning citizens are playing a crucial role in violence prevention through meaningful mentorship and community efforts to reduce crime. This is what prevents the creation of more victims—not locking children up and throwing away the key. This straightforward bill is crucial to continuing the trajectory of this positive trend for years to come.

Thank you for reading, and I urge you to vote **favorably** on **HB 759**.

Sincerely,



Serena Lao