

BILL: HB 759

TITLE: Criminal Procedure – Motion to Reduce Duration of Sentence – Repeal of Sentencing Date Limitation

DATE: February 17, 2026

POSITION: SUPPORT

COMMITTEE: Judiciary Committee

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

I respectfully submit this testimony for the official record to express my strong **SUPPORT** for House Bill 759. This second chance must apply to young people regardless of the exact age they were at the time of their incarceration—especially when those being denied relief are *younger* than the individuals who currently benefit from the law. A system that gives opportunity to older youth while permanently excluding children is not justice.

I am the mother of a son who was sentenced to an extreme prison sentence while he was still very young. Like so many others, he was still developing emotionally, mentally, and socially at the time of his offense. His life, and the lives of many others like him, should not be defined forever by the worst decision they made as a child.

HB 759 is a simple but powerful bill that ensures fairness and constitutional consistency in Maryland's sentencing laws. Last session, the Maryland Second Look Act expanded judicial review to include individuals who were between the ages of 18 and 24 at the time of their offense. However, this created a deeply troubling and unconstitutional inconsistency: young adults now have access to sentencing review, while children under 18 do not.

As a result, if a 15-year-old and a 24-year-old were arrested today as co-defendants, the 24-year-old would have a meaningful opportunity for sentence review after 20 years—while the 15-year-old would not. This directly contradicts more than a decade of U.S. Supreme Court rulings recognizing that children are fundamentally different from adults for the purposes of criminal sentencing.

HB 759 corrects this injustice. It ensures that all individuals who were under 18 at the time of their offense, regardless of when they were sentenced, have a meaningful opportunity for judicial review.

I believe in second chances—not just because my son deserves one, but because we are a nation built on redemption and growth. Research shows people age out of crime, with recidivism rates dropping significantly as people mature into their late 20s and 30s. Growth and transformation are real.

My son is not the same child he was at the time of his sentencing. He deserves the chance to show who he is now—not be forever judged by who he was then.

HB 759 does not guarantee release. It guarantees fairness and a chance for review.

I urge a favorable report on House Bill 759. Thank you for your serious consideration.

Danielle Williams