

TESTIMONY ON HB 759
Criminal Procedure – Motion to Reduce Duration of Sentence –
Repeal of Sentencing Date Limitation

House Judiciary Committee
February 17, 2026

FAVORABLE

Submitted by: Magdalena Tsiongas, MPH

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

I submit this testimony to express my **SUPPORT for House Bill 759**. I am the founder of the MD Second Look Coalition, which I started on behalf of my partner who has been serving a life without parole sentence since age 19.

HB 759 is a simple bill that ensures fundamental fairness and compliance with the U.S. Constitution in sentencing review.

In 2021, the Juvenile Restoration Act (JRA) created a mechanism for Judges to review sentences for those who were children under 18 when convicted. However, the JRA limited this review mechanism to children who were sentenced prior to October 1, 2021. Last session, our coalition worked to pass the Maryland Second Look Act and the original bill language would have expanded this judicial sentence review for ALL individuals after serving 20 years of incarceration. However, the bill was amended to expand the judicial review mechanism only to include certain individuals who were ages 18 to 24 at the time of their offense (excluding those serving life without parole and others).

This amended bill which passed, has created an unconstitutional inconsistency, where some individuals incarcerated today ages 18 to 24 will receive an opportunity for sentence review in 20 years, while individuals under 18 do not. For example, if a 15-year-old child and 24-year-old individual were arrested today as co-defendants, the 24-year-old would receive sentence review after 20 years while the 15-year-old youth would not.

HB 759 is a common-sense, straightforward technical fix to ensure these disparities don't exist. A meaningful opportunity for review should be available to all children under 18, regardless of when they were sentenced.

People who have rehabilitated and reentered the community after being granted relief from the JRA have shown there is much value to be added to our communities with them being home. I ask that you show a commitment to fairness and justice and a belief in second chances.

I urge a favorable report on House Bill 759.

Thank you.