

February 17, 2026 @ 1:00pm (House Hearing)
Maryland General Assembly
House Judiciary Committee Maryland General Assembly State House
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: HB 0759 – Criminal Procedure – Motion to Reduce Duration of Sentence – Repeal of Sentencing Date Limitation

Position: **SUPPORT**

Please accept my written testimony in support of House Bill 0759. I am testifying on behalf of the Family Support Network (FSN). FSN is a network of individuals with incarcerated loved ones, returning citizens and advocates that support one another and serve as a voice for those behind the wall. I have the lived experience and remain near to those that are dealing with the daily challenges of having an incarcerated loved one. Most of the FSN returning citizens and those still serving are lifers or have life equivalent sentences.

HB 0759 is a simple bill that ensures fundamental fairness and compliance with the U.S. Constitution in sentencing review.

Last session, the Maryland Second Look Act expanded the judicial review mechanism to include certain individuals who were ages 18 to 24 at the time of their offense. This has created an unconstitutional inconsistency, where individuals ages 18 to 24 receive an opportunity for review 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. After a decade and a half of U.S. Supreme Court jurisprudence emphasizing how children are different than adults for the purposes of criminal sentencing, it is contrary to Constitutional protections that individuals 18 and over receive sentencing review while children under 18 do not.

HB 0759 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.

On behalf of myself and FSN, I hope that you will unequivocally support this bill and move it forward with a **favorable** vote.

Respectfully,

Martina Hazelton

Martina Hazelton
Co-Founder and Executive Director



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