



Testimony for the House Judiciary Committee

March 31, 2026

SB 823 – Correctional Services –  
Maryland Parole Commission – Members

FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

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The ACLU of Maryland, the Maryland Office of the Public Defender, and the Center for Criminal Justice Reform at the University of Baltimore School of Law support SB 823 if the Committee adopts amendments to address the concerns listed below. These concerns were addressed by amendments to HB 16, so one way to address them would be to adopt the language passed. HB16 incorporated amendments that were offered in collaboration with the Office of the Public Defender, the Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform, and PREPARE. We appreciate the incorporation of many of our proposals into HB 16 as amended, which is currently pending in the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, and believe it is the stronger bill.

Even if the committee is not inclined to adopt the language from House Bill 16. We urge the below amendments to align SB 823 with the goals of improving the parole commissioner appointment and employment processes, at a minimum.

- **Amendment 1:** This amendment 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.

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.

- **Amendment 2:** This amendment allows hearing examiners to temporarily fill empty commissioner seats to avoid vacancy-related delays. 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 decision making.

(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.

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 and Maryland Office of the Public Defender urge a favorable report on SB 823 if amended.