



**Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services**  
**Office of the Secretary**

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**BILL: HOUSE BILL 16**

**POSITION: OPPOSE**

STATE OF MARYLAND

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**EXPLANATION:** HB 16 proposes significant changes to the Maryland Parole Commission by removing the authority of the Commission to appoint and utilize hearing examiners. Additionally, the bill changes the process by which members of the Commission are selected.

**COMMENTS:**

- The Maryland Parole Commission (MPC) is charged with determining on a case-by-case basis whether incarcerated individuals serving sentences of six months or more in State or local correctional facilities are suitable for release into the community under certain conditions or supervision by the Division of Parole and Probation.
- Parole Commissioners and hearing examiners hold hearings via videoconferences and in correctional facilities throughout the State. The Commission also holds open parole hearings and has a strong commitment to victim rights.
- HB 16 undermines the critical role that hearing examiners play in ensuring fair and impartial parole hearings. Hearing examiners are essential in providing independent and comprehensive reviews of parole applications, ensuring transparency and accountability with the parole process. Additionally, hearing examiners draft new policies and procedures for the MPC and serve as liaisons to other criminal justice agencies.
- Rather than removing hearing examiners, the focus should be on reinforcing their roles and ensuring they have the necessary resources to perform their duties effectively.
- In addition, HB 16 proposes to change the appointment process for members of the MPC. The current method of appointment allows for a more balanced and impartial selection of members, ensuring that those who serve on the Commission possess the necessary expertise and experience in corrections and rehabilitation.
- Ensuring that members are appointed through a transparent and inclusive process is essential for maintaining public trust in the parole

system. A shift in appointment authority could raise concerns about political influence and bias in decision-making.

- Lastly, the proposed changes in this bill would have a profound fiscal and operational impact on the MPC. To implement these changes, the MPC would need to expand its workforce by at least 50%, with a potential increase up to 100%. This includes a significant increase in the number of Commissioners, support staff, and administrative personnel. Such a staffing increase would necessitate not only larger office space but also additional office and electronic equipment to support the expanded Commission.
- It is essential that the Maryland Parole Commission uphold fairness and equity, remaining steadfast in its commitment to justice and rehabilitation for all individuals.

**CONCLUSION:** For these reasons, the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services respectfully requests an **UNFAVORABLE** Committee report on House Bill 16.