

Testimony in Support of HB 759

BILL: House Bill 759

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

DATE: February 17, 2026

POSITION: SUPPORT

COMMITTEE: House Judiciary Committee

CONTACT: Sara Citroni

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 759. My name is Sara Citroni, and I am writing in strong support of this bill, which provides a simple but essential technical correction to the Juvenile Restoration Act (JRA).

When the General Assembly passed the JRA in 2021, it created a mechanism for judicial review for individuals who were under 18 at the time of their offense. This reflected Maryland's recognition that children have a unique capacity for growth and change, and that extremely long sentences imposed on youth should be subject to meaningful review.

However, the JRA limited eligibility to individuals sentenced before October 1, 2021. That date restriction was never tied to public safety, rehabilitation, or the underlying purpose of the law. It was an administrative cutoff, not a policy judgment. As a result, two young people with identical circumstances can be treated differently for reasons that have nothing to do with their conduct or their capacity for change. HB 759 corrects this inconsistency by removing the date restriction—nothing more.

This bill does not expand the law or loosen the review process. Judges have shown how seriously they weigh these decisions. HB 759 simply corrects the date so that the same rigorous process applies to all children.

I also want to speak from personal experience. I am someone who was released under the Juvenile Restoration Act. Since coming home, I have worked hard to rebuild my life, continue my education, and contribute to my community. I now work with PREPARE to support others returning home, helping them navigate the same challenges I once faced. My experience reflects exactly what the JRA was designed to recognize: when young people are given a meaningful opportunity for review, many of us take that opportunity seriously and use it to build stable, productive lives.

And I want to be clear: I am not a singular case. There are many of us who were sentenced as children, matured, and became better people because of who we are—not because incarceration made us better. Despite the circumstances, we grew, we changed, and we came home ready to

contribute. Many of us who received judicial review under the JRA are now home—working, parenting, studying, and giving back. We are living proof that the law works as intended. HB 759 ensures that all children, not just those sentenced before an arbitrary date, have access to the same fair and consistent process.

Last session, the Maryland Second Look Act expanded judicial review to certain individuals who were 18 to 24 at the time of their offense. It is now possible for a 24-year-old to receive review after 20 years while a 15-year-old codefendant does not. HB 759 simply ensures that children are not treated less fairly than young adults.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 759.

Thank you for your consideration.

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