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SB 0823 – Correctional Services – Maryland Parole Commission - Members Incarcerated Adults – Unfavorable – March 27, 2026

Dear Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

In addition to being a formerly incarcerated Lifer with parole appearances before the Patuxent Board of Review and the MD Parole Commission in the double digits, I am a Parole Advocate and the former chair of the Decarceration and Parole Subcommittee of the sunseting Maryland Equitable Justice Collaborative (MEJC). I have continued to meet diverse stakeholders and make collaborative recommendations to improve MD's parole scheme as I was onboarded to the Maryland Justice Partnership.

While I applaud the legislature's recent interest in our State's parole scheme and the Chair's interest in Commissioner appointments, I believe SB0823, falls short and can create bigger problems for Marylanders in the years to come which reflects limited collaborative discussion of stakeholders. For the majority of the Commission's existence, it has been primarily composed of white, male, former law enforcement representatives with no term limits. Recognizing the lack of diversity of the Commission in an ever-evolving system, the Moore Administration redressed this issue by appointing commissioners from diverse disciplines and backgrounds.

While this has resulted in a more balanced Commission, the apparent lack of consideration to actual job performances of those not reappointed impacted morale. None opted to stay onboard as legislation provides until replacements were found. One retired before his term expired. For over two years, the Commission was understaffed until an influx of replacements were hired.

Additionally, it would seem that the five newly appointed commissioners around the same time detracted from the overburdened duties of the current commissioners. I would think this would be reflected in parole and revocation outcomes. Another frightening reality is that in the next 4-5 years, a new administration can repeat a similar cycle.

The legislated actions of this Bill do nothing to keep the Parole Commission full and functioning which directly impacts outcomes. It may even result in a longer process for appointments. Time and discussion are needed to include options of retention, reappointment, replacement, and advancement of hearing officers to fill interim vacancies.

Thus, I urge this honorable committee to vote unfavorably for SB0823 at this time.

Sincerely yours,

/s/Gordon R. Pack