

# **HB 759 - Written Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Anthony Wazir Muhammad

Position: FAV

**TO:**

Delegate J. Sandy Bartlett, Chair

Delegate Debra Davis, Vice Chair

Members of the *House Judiciary Committee*

**FROM:**

Anthony Wazir Muhammad

Maryland Parole Partnership / ACLU of Maryland

[amuhammad@aclu-md.org](mailto:amuhammad@aclu-md.org)

**RE: HOUSE BILL 759**

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

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

February 13, 2026

Greetings,

I respectfully submit this written testimony for the official record to express my **SUPPORT** for *House Bill 759*.

I am a returning citizen. At the age of 15, I was arrested for two homicide charges in Baltimore City. I was ultimately convicted and sentenced to life plus a consecutive 20-years in prison.

The judge who sentenced me *mistakenly* believed that I was unredeemable, unreformable, and that the actions I committed were unreconcilable. Despite having no prior adult conviction, the judge said it was a shame that someone so young could go so far wrong at such an early age in life. She stated that I had “*little prospect of ever being able to come out and function,*” and that I showed very “*little hope of rehabilitation.*” The judge was unconvinced that “*job training, education, and such would make [me] a safe citizen,*” and in her most condemning remarks stated her belief that if I was ever given the opportunity to commit the crimes again “*it would happen.*”

Thankfully, the judge who sentenced me was all wrong about me. Egregious as my crimes were, they were not the result of “*permanent incorrigibility,*” “*irreparable corruption,*” or “*exhibit such irretrievable depravity that rehabilitation is impossible,*” as articulated in several cases by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Today, I respectfully submit to this committee that not only am I redeemed, reformed, and rehabilitated, but I have also reconciled with the family of my victims who have granted me their forgiveness after successfully completing victim/offender mediation.

I served a total of 29-YEARS, 7-MONTHS, & 29-DAYS before I was released under the *Maryland Juvenile Restoration Act* on September 20, 2022. There are no words adequate enough to express the depths of my remorse for the crimes I committed. I made a horrible decision! It was the worst decision I ever made in my life; a painful decision that I deeply regret every single day of my life.

I will ALWAYS accept responsibility for my actions and continue to express my sincere and deep remorse. Additionally, as famous civil rights attorney, author of the book *Just Mercy*, and founder of the *Equal Justice Initiative*, Brian Stevenson, once said: ***“Each of us is more than the worst thing we have ever done.”***

To prove this point, the judge who released me under the JRA said the exact opposite about me than the judge who originally sentenced me. In fact, the judge who released me said that in all of her years on the bench, I was the first violent offender that she has absolutely no reservations about releasing back into the community.

I am very pleased to inform this committee that I am one of many JRA releases who have successfully reintegrated back into society, and who collectively share a less than 4% recidivism rate. Many JRA releases are doing phenomenal work in the community all throughout the State of Maryland as productive citizens. Since my release, I have been employed by the *Maryland Parole Partnership* at the *ACLU of Maryland*, as a Community Engagement Specialist with *We Our Us*, and as a Youth Mentor with *Baltimore Brothers, Inc.*, helping other youth make better decisions.

HB 759 is a straightforward bill that ensures fundamental fairness. It is a common-sense technical fix to ensure that disparities doesn't exist and a meaningful opportunity for a sentence review hearing (not a guarantee of release) is available AFTER 20-YEARS to all children who are convicted and sentenced as adults in Maryland.

For these reasons, I urge a favorable report on House Bill 759  
Thank you for your time and consideration of this legislation.

**OPD written testimony in support of HB 759.pdf**

Uploaded by: Brian Saccenti

Position: FAV



**NATASHA DARTIGUE**  
PUBLIC DEFENDER

**KEITH LOTRIDGE**  
DEPUTY PUBLIC DEFENDER

**ELIZABETH HILLIARD**  
DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

## POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

**BILL: House Bill 759 – Criminal Procedure – Motion to Reduce Duration of Sentence  
– Repeal of Sentencing Date Limitation**

**FROM: Maryland Office of the Public Defender**

**POSITION: Favorable**

**DATE: February 13, 2026**

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The Maryland Office of the Public Defender respectfully requests that the Committee issue a favorable report on House Bill 759.

House Bill 759 is a technical fix to an inconsistency in Criminal Procedure Article § 8-110. That section authorizes individuals who have been imprisoned for at least 20 years for a crime that occurred when they were under 25 years of age to file a motion for reduction of sentence.

At present, the statute allows individuals who were at least 18 but not yet 25 years old at the time of the crime to file a motion regardless of when they were sentenced, but allows individuals who were under 18 years old at the time of the crime to file a motion *only if they were sentenced before October 1, 2021*. House Bill 759 eliminates this inconsistency by removing the language requiring that minors must have been sentenced before October 1, 2021, to be eligible to file a motion.

This sentencing-date restriction indefensibly and perversely treats people who were minors at the time of the crime *worse* than people who were young adults. It incentivizes people who were young adults when the crime occurred to rehabilitate themselves by giving them hope that a judge will one day take those efforts into account and reduce their sentences, but it provides no such incentive – and no such hope – to people who are sentenced today for crimes that occurred when they were under the age of 18. House Bill 759 merely eliminates this inconsistency and gives minors convicted as adults the same positive incentives and hope as the statute presently gives eligible young adults.

**For these reasons, the Maryland Office of the Public Defender urges this Committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 759.**

**Submitted by: Maryland Office of the Public Defender, Government Relations Division**

**Authored by: Brian Saccenti & Lila Meadows**  
**Decarceration Initiative**  
**Maryland Office of the Public Defender**  
**brian.saccenti@maryland.gov**  
**lila.meadows@maryland.gov**

**2026 Testimony on HB 759 FAVORABLE Cichowski.pdf**

Uploaded by: Carol Cichowski

Position: FAV

**House Bill 759**  
**Criminal Procedure – Motion to Reduce Duration of Sentence –**  
**Repeal of Sentencing Date Limitation**  
**Judiciary Committee – February 17, 2026**  
**FAVORABLE**

**Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony in support of House Bill 759.** I am a long-time resident of Montgomery County. I previously served as a citizen member of the Montgomery County Commission on Juvenile Justice.

**HB 759 would eliminate language in the Juvenile Restoration Act (JRA) that currently restricts eligibility for possible resentencing to individuals who were sentenced as children before October 1, 2021.** Unless this language is eliminated, individuals sentenced as children on or after October 1, 2021, would be treated less favorably than individuals sentenced at ages 18 to 24, who are now eligible for reconsideration under legislative changes that were in the 2025 session. **It makes no sense to leave behind individuals who were sentenced as children when it is still the case that the opportunities provided under the JRA for judicial review serve the public’s interest in supporting the rehabilitation of juveniles, addressing mass incarceration, and fostering safe and healthy communities.**

Research on brain development tells us that teenagers have brains that are not fully developed. As a result, they are less capable of controlling their emotions and more impulsive in stressful situations. They lack maturity and the ability to weigh the consequences of their actions. **The Supreme Court has long recognized that these differences in brain development between children and adults make children less culpable.** It was this evidence on brain science that Maryland lawmakers found persuasive when they enacted the JRA.

**It is also clear that judges can be trusted to make good judgments about the readiness of individuals who have spent at least 20 years behind the prison walls to return to their communities and lead productive lives.** Since the enactment of the JRA, judges have recognized the enormous capacity of young people to change after 20 years of incarceration but have not treated the JRA as a get-out-of-jail-free card. The JRA has proved to be good law.

**I believe in giving individuals second chances because the social, human, moral, and economic costs of keeping people behind bars longer than needed to achieve the goals of incarceration are enormous.** If given a second chance, individuals who caused harm to others during their adolescence can become caring family members, good neighbors, and productive members of the community. We all benefit when people who have been incarcerated are successfully reintegrated into the community.

**For these reasons, I urge a Favorable report on HB 759. This bill makes a commonsense change and is good public policy.**

Carol Cichowski  
Bethesda, Maryland



# **SEIU Local 500 - Testimony in Support of HB 759 20**

Uploaded by: Christopher Cano

Position: FAV



Testimony - HB 759, Criminal Procedure - Motion to Reduce Duration of Sentence -  
Repeal of Sentencing Date Limitation  
Favorable  
House Judiciary Committee  
February 17, 2026  
Christopher C. Cano, MPA  
Director of Political & Legislative Affairs on Behalf of SEIU Local 500

Honorable Chairwoman Bartlett & Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

Maryland has made important and nationally recognized progress in sentencing reform over the past several years. The enactment of the Juvenile Restoration Act and the Maryland Second Look Act reflected a bipartisan understanding that young people are fundamentally different from adults, that they possess a unique capacity for growth and rehabilitation, and that our justice system must allow for meaningful review of lengthy sentences imposed on our youth.

These reforms were grounded in decades of research and constitutional principles recognizing that children and young adults have diminished culpability and heightened capacity for change. They created a mechanism for judicial review after 20 years of incarceration—offering a second look at sentences imposed when individuals were very young, often under circumstances shaped by immaturity, trauma, or limited decision-making capacity.

However, despite this significant progress, an inconsistency remains.

Under current law, individuals who were convicted as adults for offenses committed while they were minors are eligible to file a motion to reduce the duration of their sentence only if they were sentenced before October 1, 2021. This sentencing-date limitation creates an arbitrary distinction between individuals based solely on when their sentencing occurred—not on their age at the time of the offense, not on their rehabilitation, and not on public safety considerations.

House Bill 759 corrects that inconsistency by repealing the sentencing-date limitation. It ensures that all individuals who were convicted as adults for conduct committed when they were minors—and who have served at least 20 years—are treated equally under the law. The bill does not guarantee release. It simply guarantees access to judicial review.

Importantly, the existing procedural safeguards remain in place. The court must hold a hearing. The individual must be present. The State may present evidence in support of or opposition to the motion. Victims are notified and may submit victim impact statements. Judges retain full discretion to deny relief where appropriate. Public safety remains paramount.

This bill aligns Maryland law with the spirit and intent of prior reforms. If we believe that youth matters at sentencing—and Maryland has clearly said that it does—then access to review should not turn on a technical cutoff date. Justice should be consistent, not contingent.

SEIU Local 500 supports policies that strengthen communities, promote fairness, and recognize the human capacity for change. Many of our members work in public institutions and see firsthand the importance of rehabilitation and reintegration. A system that allows courts to reassess sentences imposed on children after decades of demonstrated growth is not soft on crime—it is smart, equitable, and rooted in evidence.

House Bill 759 completes the work that the Juvenile Restoration Act and the Maryland Second Look Act began. It removes an arbitrary barrier and ensures that similarly situated individuals are treated similarly under the law.

For these reasons, SEIU Local 500 respectfully urges a favorable report on House Bill 759.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Christopher C. Cano, MPA  
Director of Political & Legislative Affairs  
SEIU Local 500

**HB0759.docx.pdf**

Uploaded by: Craig Muhammad

Position: FAV

# Project Emancipation Now

Craig Muhammad, B.S., CPRS, Co-founder

[craigmuhammad0@gmail.com](mailto:craigmuhammad0@gmail.com)

667-207-1818

February 13, 2026

Dear Legislators:

I respectfully submit this testimony for the official record to express my support for HB 759. I am 65 years of age and a former incarcerated individual. I was released from incarceration on September 24, 2024 after serving 42 years and 33 days in confinement. I did not have the opportunity to benefit from Second Look legislation. Nevertheless, I was paroled to freedom.

During my incarceration I took advantage of every opportunity to become the man I am today. I created many programs, including PEN (Project Emancipation Now) that has emancipated more men from gangs than any other entity in the state of Maryland.

My 42 years in confinement has given me the experience of meeting many men that deserve a second chance. Therefore, I am asking you to support HB 759. Many of the men that are returning to the community after serving decades in prison have become effective violence interrupters. They have been instrumental in reducing Baltimore's homicide numbers.

My written testimony is short—only because you know the intricacies of HB 759. Please pass this important legislation. It will help repair families, make our communities safer, and make Maryland the icon of Second Chances for all of its citizens.

Sincerely,  
Craig Muhammad

**CrystalCarpenter\_RBIJ\_HB759.pdf**

Uploaded by: Crystal Carpenter

Position: FAV



The **CAMPAIGN** for the  
**FAIR SENTENCING**  
of **YOUTH**

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: Judiciary Committee  
CONTACT: Crystal Carpenter, Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth

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

My name is Crystal Carpenter. I serve as Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth (CFSY) and have the honor of leading its **National Family Network** (NFN). I respectfully submit this testimony in **support** of House Bill 759. I thank Delegate Stinnett for introducing this legislation and appreciate the General Assembly's continued commitment to fair and constitutional youth sentencing.

The CFSY is a national coalition working to end extreme youth sentencing and advance age-appropriate, constitutional approaches to accountability, healing, and public safety.

The NFN is a collective of family members and loved ones impacted by youth violence. This includes individuals who have lost loved ones to youth violence, as well as families of people serving lengthy adult sentences for acts committed as children. The Network promotes healing and restorative practices and works to end extreme sentences for youth, including life without the possibility of parole.

CFSY proudly supported the 2021 passage of the Juvenile Restoration Act, which created a meaningful opportunity for sentence review after 20 years for individuals who were under 18 at the time of their offense. However, the current sentencing date limitation leaves some children unfairly excluded from that opportunity.

HB 759 is a common-sense, straightforward technical fix that removes this arbitrary restriction and ensures that all children under 18—regardless of when they were sentenced—have access to the same opportunity for review. This change promotes fairness, aligns with constitutional principles recognizing that children are different from adults for sentencing purposes, and reduces unnecessary legal risk for the state.

A matter of hours, days, or calendar timing should not determine who has access to reconsideration. Justice should not hinge on the happenstance of when a sentence was imposed. When eligibility turns on a procedural date rather than the core principle that youth matters and that young people can change, the law drifts away from its purpose.

Most importantly, HB 759 restores hope—hope for families waiting for their loved ones to be seen as more than their worst mistake, and hope for young people inside who are working every day to grow and change. That hope should not depend on an arbitrary date in the statute.

For these reasons, I urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 759. Thank you for your consideration.

Crystal Carpenter  
Chief Operating Officer  
Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth



## RBIJ Statement in Support of HB759 / SB162

The Responsible Business Initiative for Justice (RBIJ) is an award-winning international nonprofit that works with companies to champion solutions that promote public safety, deliver justice, and strengthen communities. RBIJ has partnered with hundreds of businesses in over two dozen states to advocate for common-sense reforms that expand the workforce and stimulate growth.

RBIJ strongly supports HB759/SB162 as a necessary step to reinforce fairness, constitutional consistency, and equal treatment in Maryland’s sentencing review framework. Business leaders across the United States increasingly understand that racial inequities in the justice system carry lasting consequences for families, community stability, workforce participation, and long-term economic growth.

HB759/SB162 addresses a clear imbalance in the current sentencing review process by ensuring that individuals who were under 18 at the time of their offense are afforded the same opportunity for review that is currently available to certain individuals who were ages 18 to 24. Providing access to meaningful review for youth is consistent with constitutional principles and longstanding recognition that children are different for purposes of sentencing. The bill preserves judicial discretion, maintains accountability, and keeps public safety paramount, while ensuring the law functions in a fair and even-handed manner.

A justice system that operates equitably strengthens communities, expands economic opportunity, and reinforces public confidence — all of which are essential to a stable and competitive business climate. RBIJ supports HB759/SB162 because advancing fairness and consistency in sentencing review is not only sound policy, it is vital to Maryland’s families, communities, and long-term economic future.

Nicole Banister  
Director, Policy and Advocacy  
Responsible Business Initiative for Justice

**HB759.pdf**

Uploaded by: Danielle Williams

Position: FAV

**BILL:** HB 759

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

**DATE:** February 17, 2026

**POSITION:** SUPPORT

**COMMITTEE:** Judiciary Committee

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

I respectfully submit this testimony for the official record to express my strong **SUPPORT** for House Bill 759. This second chance must apply to young people regardless of the exact age they were at the time of their incarceration—especially when those being denied relief are *younger* than the individuals who currently benefit from the law. A system that gives opportunity to older youth while permanently excluding children is not justice.

I am the mother of a son who was sentenced to an extreme prison sentence while he was still very young. Like so many others, he was still developing emotionally, mentally, and socially at the time of his offense. His life, and the lives of many others like him, should not be defined forever by the worst decision they made as a child.

HB 759 is a simple but powerful bill that ensures fairness and constitutional consistency in Maryland's sentencing laws. Last session, the Maryland Second Look Act expanded judicial review to include individuals who were between the ages of 18 and 24 at the time of their offense. However, this created a deeply troubling and unconstitutional inconsistency: young adults now have access to sentencing review, while children under 18 do not.

As a result, if a 15-year-old and a 24-year-old were arrested today as co-defendants, the 24-year-old would have a meaningful opportunity for sentence review after 20 years—while the 15-year-old would not. This directly contradicts more than a decade of U.S. Supreme Court rulings recognizing that children are fundamentally different from adults for the purposes of criminal sentencing.

HB 759 corrects this injustice. It ensures that all individuals who were under 18 at the time of their offense, regardless of when they were sentenced, have a meaningful opportunity for judicial review.

I believe in second chances—not just because my son deserves one, but because we are a nation built on redemption and growth. Research shows people age out of crime, with recidivism rates dropping significantly as people mature into their late 20s and 30s. Growth and transformation are real.

My son is not the same child he was at the time of his sentencing. He deserves the chance to show who he is now—not be forever judged by who he was then.

HB 759 does not guarantee release. It guarantees fairness and a chance for review.

I urge a favorable report on House Bill 759. Thank you for your serious consideration.

**Danielle Williams**

# **Darryl Green Testimony HB 759.pdf**

Uploaded by: Darryl Green

Position: FAV

Testimony in Support of **House Bill 759 / Senate Bill 162**

Darryl Green

February 13, 2026

Judiciary Committee

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

My name is Darryl Green. I am a Maryland resident and the President and Principal Consultant of Deep Forgiveness. I write to express my **SUPPORT for House Bill 759 / Senate Bill 162**.

I write to you as someone who has firsthand experienced the pain that youth can cause and also as someone who has experienced the powerful healing of forgiveness when children are given second chances. In 1998, a 15-year-old boy stabbed my younger brother to death during an argument over a pair of tennis shoes. It was a senseless crime that took the life of someone whom I loved dearly. The teenager responsible for my brother's death was charged with murder in the adult system and was sentenced to life without the possibility of parole.

For two and a half decades, he served time with no possibility of returning home — and for two and a half decades, I was in my own prison, a prison of hatred and anger. After 25 years, I realized that the only way for me to heal was to forgive him and move forward with my life. In 2013, this child — who had since grown into a man — had an opportunity to appear before a judge in a resentencing hearing. It was in that courtroom that I heard him read a letter apologizing to my family and shared how sorry and remorseful he was for his actions that had caused my family so much pain.

I supported him in that court room, recommending that he be released. We shook hands, both of us crying, and I told him “You’ve been known for taking a life, now let’s go save some lives together.” Three weeks after I testified in favor of his release, he came to visit me at the Christopher Place Employment Academy where I worked. He, his mother, his aunt and I cried and prayed together on the front steps. We built a relationship that has continued to today, and we started Deep Forgiveness, a Baltimore-based organization where we spread the power of forgiveness, host workshops and trainings, and host a mentoring program for youth.

Healing after my brother's death did not come overnight, but instead arrived slowly over time when I opened my heart to the possibility of forgiveness. It made me realize that we cannot afford to give up on children. Yes, we must hold them accountable, but we also need judges to review their sentences to see who they have become. For this reason, I enthusiastically supported the passage of the Juvenile Restoration Act. It's only natural that all Maryland children under 18 should have this opportunity, regardless of the date on which they were sentenced. To do otherwise is profoundly unjust, and prevents both youthful offenders and survivors in their cases from the opportunity to build a healing relationship such as I have.

I ask the committee to favorably report **House Bill 759 / Senate Bill 162**.

**HB759 Support letter from HOTT 2-13-2026.pdf**

Uploaded by: Dr. Carmen Johnson

Position: FAV



**February 17, 2026**

**TO:** Members of the House Judiciary Committee

**RE:** House Bill 759

**Position:** Favorable

Dear Chairwoman Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

On behalf of Helping Ourselves to Transform (HOTT), I write in strong support of House Bill 759.

HB759 corrects a clear and unjust disparity created by prior reforms. The 2021 Juvenile Restoration Act provided a pathway for judicial review for children under 18—but limited that relief to those sentenced before October 1, 2021. The Maryland Second Look Act later expanded review eligibility to certain individuals ages 18 to 24, unintentionally creating a troubling inconsistency: under current law, a 24-year-old may be eligible for review after 20 years, while a child sentenced at age 15 after October 1, 2021 is denied that same opportunity.

Children are constitutionally and developmentally different from adults. Science, law, and public policy recognize that youth have a greater capacity for growth, change, and rehabilitation. HB759 restores fairness by ensuring that all children under 18, regardless of sentencing date, have equal access to judicial review.

This bill does not guarantee release. It guarantees review. It allows courts to consider maturity, rehabilitation, and transformation. It strengthens public safety by recognizing that accountability and redemption can coexist.

Justice should not depend on an arbitrary date. For these reasons, Helping Ourselves to Transform respectfully urges a favorable report on House Bill 759.

Sincerely,

***Dr. Carmen R. Johnson/s/*** Executive Director  
Helping Ourselves to Transform (HOTT)

# **Testimony HB759.pdf**

Uploaded by: Earl Young

Position: FAV

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 759**  
**Earl Young**  
**February 13, 2026**  
**House Judicial Committee**

Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and Members of the House Judicial Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of HB 759. I am a Maryland resident and a returning citizen who served nearly 35 years in the Maryland prison system before Governor Larry Hogan commuted my life sentence to 49 years. Because of the diminution credits I earned, I returned home in 2019, prior to the passage of the Juvenile Restoration Act.

I entered prison in 1984 at the age of 17. At that time, I still had hope—hope that if I worked hard, stayed out of trouble, and focused on rehabilitation, I could one day return home through parole after serving 15 years. That hope was severely damaged in 1995 when Governor Parris Glendening implemented the “life means life” policy. Overnight, it became clear that no matter how much good I did, it would not matter.

Despite that reality, I continued to do good. I earned my GED, pursued college courses, and maintained trusted and preferred work assignments. Many others were not able to continue in the same way. When hope is removed, people give up. They lose motivation, purpose, and a reason to live. Hopelessness creates instability within prisons, requiring higher security and making institutions more dangerous for everyone—incarcerated people and staff alike.

Since returning home, I have continued the same type of service I committed to while incarcerated. I mentor youth in Baltimore City schools and now serve as a supervisor, hiring and overseeing individuals who mentor young people. I work with the Mayor’s Office of African American Male Engagement as a Credible Messenger and participate in the Group Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS) as a (Community Moral Voice) CMV partner. My work involves supporting individuals who have caused harm and those who have been harmed by violence.

I also share my lived experience as part of the Maryland Equitable Justice Collaboration, working alongside the Office of the Attorney General and the Office of the Public Defender. I am involved in multiple collaborative efforts, including law enforcement partnerships, youth justice reform initiatives, reentry-focused committees, and prison and detention center reform efforts. I have served as a Johns Hopkins youth coordinator, completed the Baltimore City Police Reentry Program, and spoken at numerous juvenile facilities and prisons across the state about reentry and transformation. I regularly return to the institutions where I was incarcerated, where people tell me that my story gives them hope.

HB 759 is a common-sense and necessary technical correction to existing law. Under the current statute, if a child under 18 and an adult under 25 were arrested today as co-defendants, the young adult would likely be eligible for sentence review after 20 years, while the child would not. This result is fundamentally unfair. Children are uniquely capable of growth, change, and rehabilitation. The October 1, 2021 date restriction undermines the purpose of the Juvenile Restoration Act and must be removed.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 759.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

**Earl Young**

# **SB 759 Support Motion to Reduce Duration Sentence**

Uploaded by: Eddie Ellis

Position: FAV

# *the* CAMPAIGN *for the* FAIR SENTENCING *of* YOUTH



Bill: House Bill 759

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

Date: February 12, 2026

Position: SUPPORT

Committee: Judicial Proceedings Committee

CONTACT: Eddie Ellis, Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth

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

My name is Eddie Ellis. I serve as the Co-Director of Outreach and Member Services at the Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth (CFSY), and I have the honor of leading the Incarcerated Children's Advocacy Network (ICAN), a one-of-a-kind national community of more than 300 adults who were sentenced to life or other extreme sentences as children, at age 17 or younger.

I respectfully submit this testimony in support of House Bill 759. I want to thank Delegate Stinnett for introducing this legislation and acknowledge the General Assembly's continued commitment to fair and constitutional youth sentencing.

The CFSY is a national organization working to end extreme youth sentencing and advance age-appropriate, constitutional approaches to accountability, healing, and public safety.

The ICAN community is made up of adults who were once children sentenced to life or extreme sentences and spent decades in prison. I am honored to call these individuals my brothers and sisters. Today, we are home, contributing to our communities, supporting our families, and creating positive change. We refuse to let our past define our future, and we are living proof of what opportunity, hope, and second chances look like. We also have a local support group for individuals who have come home under the Juvenile Restoration Act that we've been hosting for the past four and a half years. In this space, we offer any resources we have, share programming opportunities, and provide a safe, supportive environment where people can feel heard and valued.

CFSY proudly supported the 2021 passage of the Juvenile Restoration Act, which created a meaningful opportunity for sentence review after 20 years for individuals who were under 18 at the time of their offense. However, the current sentencing-date limitation leaves some children unfairly excluded from that opportunity.

# *the* CAMPAIGN *for the* FAIR SENTENCING *of* YOUTH



House Bill 759 is a straightforward, common-sense technical fix. It removes this arbitrary restriction and ensures that all children under 18 regardless of when they were sentenced have access to the same opportunity for review. This change promotes fairness, aligns with constitutional principles recognizing that children are different from adults for sentencing purposes, and reduces unnecessary legal risk for the state.

Most importantly, HB 759 restores hope for those who are on the inside and hope for family members who are waiting for their loved ones to have an opportunity to be seen. For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 759. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely Eddie Ellis

**MD Catholic Conference\_HB 759\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Garrett O'Day

Position: FAV



MARYLAND  
CATHOLIC  
CONFERENCE

February 17, 2026

**HB 759**

**Criminal Procedure - Motion to Reduce Duration of Sentence - Repeal of Sentencing Date  
Limitation**

**House Judiciary Committee**

**Position: FAVORABLE**

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of House Bill 759. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

In 2021, the General Assembly passed Senate Bill 494, prohibiting a court from imposing a sentence of life without parole on a person who was less than eighteen years of age at the time the offense was committed. Furthermore, it would allowed a court to review a sentence for an offense committed under the age of eighteen after an individual has served twenty years of their sentence. The legislation dictates that courts must now consider factors such as age at the time of the offense, the nature of the offense, good behavior, academic achievement, family circumstances and demonstrated rehabilitative nature. The legislation, however, limited such review to offenses committed prior to October 21, 2021.

That aforementioned temporal limitation has posed a constitutional inconsistency, as Maryland's Second Look Act subsequently expanded the judicial review mechanism to include certain individuals who were ages 18 to 24 at the time of their offense. Thus, where individuals ages 18 to 24 receive an opportunity for review, individuals under 18 do not if the offense was committed after 2021. For example, if a 15-year-old child and 24-year-old adult 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.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has stated that "society must never respond to children who have committed crimes as though they are somehow equal to adults fully formed in conscience and fully aware of their actions." (*Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice*, USCCB, 2000)

House Bill 759 is an impactful technical correction and we thus request a favorable report.

# **HB 759 Motion to Reduce Duration of Sentence CCJR**

Uploaded by: Heather Warnken

Position: FAV



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 759**

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

TO: Members of the House Judiciary Committee

FROM: **Center for Criminal Justice Reform, University of Baltimore School of Law**

DATE: February 13, 2026

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The University of Baltimore School of Law Center for Criminal Justice Reform supports community-driven efforts to improve public safety and address the harm and inequity caused by the criminal legal system. In alignment with this mission, **we offer our strong support of House Bill 759.**

Last year, the General Assembly passed the Maryland Second Look Act, allowing certain individuals 18-24 years old at the time of their offense to file a petition to reduce their sentence if they have served at least 20 years of the term of confinement. This important expansion of opportunity for judicial review includes the consideration of critical factors to determine that the individual does not pose a risk to the public, and that the interests of justice will be better served by a reduced sentence.

While the Second Look Act was an extremely important step forward for our state, as passed, it unfortunately created a harmful inconsistency that runs counter to the interests of justice and the data. While the Act allowed 18 to 24 year old individuals to receive an opportunity for review, individuals under the age of 18 at the time of their offense were not included. This means, for example, that a child under 18 and a 24-year-old arrested today as co-defendants would face different outcomes under the current law. The 24-year-old would be eligible for sentence review after 20 years, while a 15-, 16- or 17-year-old would not. HB 759 is a straightforward and common-sense fix to address these disparities and ensure fundamental fairness, as well as compliance with the U.S. Constitution in sentencing review.

**House Bill 759 is consistent with decades of U.S. Supreme Court precedent which has repeatedly emphasized that defendants who were convicted of crimes when they were children deserve greater not fewer opportunities to demonstrate their successful rehabilitation.** Since 2005, the U.S. Supreme Court has held on numerous occasions that the Eighth Amendment requires youth under the age of 18 to be sentenced with a focus on their potential for growth, maturity, and rehabilitation. In the twenty years since the landmark decision *Roper v. Simmons* (holding that the eighth amendment prohibits anyone from being sentenced to



death for a crime committed while the individual was under the age of 18), the Court has maintained that children must be provided with sentences that create a meaningful opportunity to obtain release based on a variety of factors such as maturity and rehabilitation.<sup>1</sup>

In 2012, the Court established that mandatory life sentences for crimes committed by individuals under 18 violate the Eighth Amendment.<sup>2</sup> Once again, with a focus on the potential for rehabilitation, the Court in *Miller v. Alabama* emphasized that children have “greater prospects for reform” and that a mandatory life-without-parole sentence disregards the possibility of rehabilitation.<sup>3</sup>

It is clear from this precedent that the U.S. Constitution prohibits the extreme and disproportionate punishment of children. With a focus on the importance of rehabilitation, the U.S. Supreme Court has built a body of jurisprudence that favors creating mechanisms for the consideration of children, taking into account the vast research supporting their unique potential for growth and transformative change. Maryland’s current implementation of legislation which unintentionally harms or excludes them, while providing relief for older individuals including potential co-defendants, is an inconsistency that must be urgently fixed.

**We urge a favorable report on House Bill 759.**

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<sup>1</sup> *Roper v. Simmons*, 543 U.S. 551 (2005)

<sup>2</sup> *Miller v. Alabama*, 132 S. Ct. 2455 (2012)

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

# **HRFK Testimony in Support of HB 759 (House).pdf**

Uploaded by: James Dold

Position: FAV



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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 759 BEFORE THE MARYLAND HOUSE  
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE**

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*February 17, 2026*

Dear Chairwoman Bartlett and Members of the Maryland House Judiciary Committee:

Human Rights for Kids respectfully submits this testimony for the official record to express our support for HB 409. We are grateful to Delegate Stinnett for his leadership in introducing this bill and appreciate the Maryland Legislature's willingness to address these important human rights issues concerning Maryland's children.

House Bill 759 is a logical, technical fix that ensures all children receive the benefit of the Juvenile Restoration Act's sentencing review provision. Studies have repeatedly shown that children's brains are not fully developed. This means that they are frequently impulsive and immature in their decision making as teenagers, but also have great potential for growth and change over time. The Juvenile Restoration Act provides judges with the opportunity to review a child's sentence after they have served 20 years in prison. This opportunity should not be limited based on an arbitrary sentencing date, but should be available to **all** of Maryland's children.

Currently in Maryland, due to the 2025 Second Look Act, there are individuals who were ages 18 to 24 at the time of their offenses receiving judicial review via the expanded Juvenile Restoration Act, but their child codefendants under 18 are not. An awareness of this inequity creates a moral imperative for the General Assembly to act. Nelson Mandela said, "There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children." The urgency with which Maryland passes this simple technical fix contained in HB 759 reveals how the state treats its children, especially children of color and children who have experienced trauma. I encourage the Committee to issue a **favorable report on House Bill 759**.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Submitted by:  
James Dold  
Chief Executive Officer & Founder  
Human Rights for Kids

# **HB 759 Testimony JSexton.pdf**

Uploaded by: John Sexton

Position: FAV

**House Bill 759** (Criminal Procedure – Motion to Reduce Duration of Sentence – Repeal of Sentencing Date Limitation)

**House Judiciary Committee**

Position: **Favorable**

February 17, 2026

Submitted by: **John Sexton**

To the Honorable members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I would urge each of you to vote favorably on HB 759.

It is imperative that Maryland continues to strive for the redeeming of our youth - not only today, but for future generations. This addendum to the JRA ensures that those future generations have that opportunity.

As someone whose journey inside the Maryland prison system began as a teenager - and who spent 37 years straight atoning for the crime I committed - I can share with you that without the availability of this JRA mechanism, most of Maryland's youthful offenders charged as adults would be relegated to living a life filled with hopelessness and an inability to reach their incredible potential for reformation.

Once again, I urge you to **vote favorably on HB 759**.

Shalom!

John Sexton

**FJP HB759 Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Lisa Hamer

Position: FAV



**BILL: House Bill 759**

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

**DATE:** February 13, 2026

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

**COMMITTEE:** House Judiciary Committee

**CONTACT:** Fair and Just Prosecution, Lisa Hamer, Senior Policy & Advocacy Counsel

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

I write on behalf of Fair and Just Prosecution to express our **SUPPORT for House Bill 759**. FJP, a project of the Tides Center, is a national organization that brings together elected prosecutors as part of a nonpartisan network of leaders committed to improving public safety and promoting justice. FJP works with a new generation of prosecutors from all across the country who are committed to a justice system grounded in fairness, compassion, and fiscal responsibility. The leaders we work with hail from over 60 jurisdictions — urban, suburban, and rural alike — and they collectively represent nearly 20 percent of our nation’s population.

FJP encourages state and local leaders to examine their criminal legal system’s practices and consider policies that create a fairer approach to criminal justice. We support measures that provide opportunities for parole review and other second-look mechanisms for revisiting and mitigating lengthy sentences in cases where returning an individual to their community is consistent with public safety and the interests of justice. This is especially important in cases of children and youth sentenced to long prison terms, given their unique developmental status and incredible capacity for change and rehabilitation.

SB 162 is a simple bill that ensures fundamental fairness and compliance with the U.S. Constitution in sentencing review. Too many members of our communities are growing old in prisons. They are serving sentences they received for crimes they committed before the age of majority when their brains were not fully developed and their capabilities of regulating emotions, exercising control, evaluating risks and consequences, and making decisions were diminished.<sup>1</sup> Many of them are now transformed adults who can safely return to our communities and deserve the opportunity for a second chance.

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Laurence Steinberg, *Risk Taking in Adolescence: What Changes, and Why?*, 1021(1) *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 51-58 (2006), <https://nyaspubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1196/annals.1308.005>.

As fully described in our [issue brief](#) focusing on young adults in the criminal legal system, FJP believes it is important to implement parole review and resentencing tools for youth and young adults. There have been reforms passed in several jurisdictions that acknowledge the social and neurological development status of youth and young adults by providing them opportunities for early parole.

Many prosecutors whom FJP works with encourage and support legislative second look mechanisms<sup>2</sup> and have implemented changes within their offices to provide sentencing modification opportunities.<sup>3</sup> Research we co-led found remarkable public support for resentencing opportunities for people serving lengthy sentences.<sup>4</sup> In states and jurisdictions where changes in the law allow for the release of people previously sentenced to extreme prison terms, research has shown low recidivism rates and positive outcomes for communities.<sup>5</sup> This has proven especially true for youth: a study of a sample of former juveniles sentenced to life who have been released found the rate of recidivism to be a mere 1.14 percent.<sup>6</sup> Today, many of those individuals positively serve their communities as youth mentors, substance abuse counselors, re-entry specialists, and directors of violence intervention programs.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See Becky Feldman, *The Second Look Movement: A Review of the Nation's Sentence Review Laws*, The Sentencing Project (May 2024) <https://www.sentencingproject.org/reports/the-second-look-movement-a-review-of-the-nations-sentence-review-laws/>.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Marco Poggio, *Minnesota Joins Prosecutor-Led Resentencing Law Movement*, Law 360 (Jun. 2023), <https://www.law360.com/articles/1680599/minnesota-joins-prosecutor-led-resentencing-law-movement>; The Brooklyn District Attorney's Office, *Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez Announces Dedicated Post-Conviction Justice Bureau that Will Include Parole and Clemency Unit, Sealing Unit and Nationally Recognized Conviction Review Unit* (Apr. 2019), <http://www.brooklynda.org/2019/04/17/brooklyn-district-attorney-eric-gonzalez-announces-dedicated-post-conviction-justice-bureau-that-will-include-parole-and-clemency-unit-sealing-unit-and-nationally-recognized-conviction-review-unit/>; District Attorney of New York County (Manhattan), *Post-Conviction Justice Unit*, <https://manhattanda.org/pcju/>; Philadelphia District Attorney's Office, *Conviction Integrity Unit*, <https://phillyda.org/safety-and-justice/investigations/conviction-integrity-unit-ciui/>; Denver District Attorney's Office Policy, Sentencing Review Policy & Protocol, <https://www.denverda.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/0805Sentencing-Equity-Policy-updated-June-2024.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> *Policies & Polling on Reducing Excessive Prison Terms*, Data for Progress et al., (Feb. 2020) <https://www.filesforprogress.org/memos/reducing-excessive-prison-sentences.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Human Rights Watch, *I Just Want to Give Back; The Reintegration of People Sentenced to Life Without Parole*, (Jun. 2024) [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media\\_2023/06/usa\\_lwop0623.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2023/06/usa_lwop0623.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Philadelphia DAO, *New Study Finds 1% Recidivism Rate Among Released Philly Juvenile Lifers*, The Justice Wire (Apr. 2020), <https://medium.com/philadelphia-justice/new-study-finds-1-recidivism-rate-among-released-philly-juvenile-lifers-607f19d6d822>.

<sup>7</sup> Human Rights Watch, *I Just Want to Give Back; The Reintegration of People Sentenced to Life Without Parole*, (Jun. 2024) [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media\\_2023/06/usa\\_lwop0623.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2023/06/usa_lwop0623.pdf).

Last session, the Maryland Second Look Act expanded the judicial review mechanism previously enacted under the Juvenile Restoration Act to include certain individuals who were ages 18 to 24 at the time of their offense. This laudable change in the law created a legal and logical 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. This discrepancy in the law must be addressed to fulfill the purpose and goal of Maryland's Juvenile Restoration Act and Second Look Act and to ensure that Maryland law complies with the spirit and lessons of United States Supreme Court jurisprudence addressing juvenile sentencing.<sup>8</sup>

SB 162 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 convicted and sentenced.

We urge a favorable reporting on House Bill 759. Thank you for your serious consideration of this legislation.

Sincerely,

Lisa Hamer  
Senior Advocacy & Policy Counsel  
Fair and Just Prosecution

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<sup>8</sup> See, *Graham v. Florida*, 560 U.S. 48 (2010) and *Miller v. Alabama*, 567 U.S. 460 (2012).

# **HB759\_MTsiongas.pdf**

Uploaded by: Magdalena Tsiongas

Position: FAV

**TESTIMONY ON HB 759**  
**Criminal Procedure – Motion to Reduce Duration of Sentence –**  
**Repeal of Sentencing Date Limitation**

**House Judiciary Committee**  
**February 17, 2026**

**FAVORABLE**

Submitted by: Magdalena Tsiongas, MPH

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

I submit this testimony to express my **SUPPORT for House Bill 759**. I am the founder of the MD Second Look Coalition, which I started on behalf of my partner who has been serving a life without parole sentence since age 19.

HB 759 is a simple bill that ensures fundamental fairness and compliance with the U.S. Constitution in sentencing review.

In 2021, the Juvenile Restoration Act (JRA) created a mechanism for Judges to review sentences for those who were children under 18 when convicted. However, the JRA limited this review mechanism to children who were sentenced prior to October 1, 2021. Last session, our coalition worked to pass the Maryland Second Look Act and the original bill language would have expanded this judicial sentence review for ALL individuals after serving 20 years of incarceration. However, the bill was amended to expand the judicial review mechanism only to include certain individuals who were ages 18 to 24 at the time of their offense (excluding those serving life without parole and others).

This amended bill which passed, has created an unconstitutional inconsistency, where some individuals incarcerated today ages 18 to 24 will receive an opportunity for sentence review in 20 years, 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.

HB 759 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.

People who have rehabilitated and reentered the community after being granted relief from the JRA have shown there is much value to be added to our communities with them being home. I ask that you show a commitment to fairness and justice and a belief in second chances.

I urge a favorable report on House Bill 759.

Thank you.

# **HB 0759 - JRA - REPEAL OF SENTENCING DATE LIMITATI**

Uploaded by: MARTINA HAZELTON

Position: FAV

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



Family Support Network (FSN)  
3924 Minnesota Ave, NE  
PO Box 64093  
Washington, D.C. 20029  
Website: [thefamilysupportnetwork.org](http://thefamilysupportnetwork.org)

**SB162\_HB759.docx (1).pdf**

Uploaded by: Melody Hession

Position: FAV



**Delaware-Maryland Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

Testimony Prepared for the  
Judiciary Committee  
on  
**House Bill 759**  
February 13, 2026  
Position: Favorable

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am Reverend Melody Hession-Sigmon, assistant to the bishop for public policy in the Delaware-Maryland Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, a faith community with congregations in every part of the state.

As historical supporters of the Maryland Second Look Act, we join with those voices again to advocate for SB 162, which is a simple bill ensuring 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.

In Maryland we have had an authorized congregation of incarcerated people, women and men, at Jessup since 1985, the Community of St. Dymas. The experience of our prison ministries is that there are prisoners who can be safely released into the community, and whose continued confinement would no longer serve any real purpose of justice.

We ask for a favorable report.

Rev. Melody Hession

# **Nable-Juris Testimony HB 759.pdf**

Uploaded by: Nikola Nable-Juris

Position: FAV



The **CAMPAIGN** for the  
**FAIR SENTENCING**  
of **YOUTH**

Bill: House Bill 759  
Title: Criminal Procedure – Motion to Reduce Duration of Sentence – Repeal of Sentencing Date Limitation  
Date: February 13, 2026  
Position: SUPPORT  
Committee: Judiciary Committee  
Contact: Nikola Nable-Juris, Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth

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

The Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth respectfully submits this testimony for the official record to express our **SUPPORT for House Bill 759**. We are grateful to Delegate Stinnett for his leadership in introducing this bill and appreciate the Maryland General Assembly’s commitment to ensuring constitutional compliance in youth sentencing, which can be accomplished with this simple technical change.

The Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth (“CFSY”) is a national coalition and clearinghouse that coordinates, develops, and supports efforts to implement age-appropriate alternatives to the extreme sentencing of America’s youth with a focus on abolishing life-without-parole and life-equivalent sentences for all children. We collaborate with policymakers, national and community organizations, and individuals directly impacted by these policies to develop solutions that keep communities safe while providing opportunities for children to reintegrate into society after demonstrated rehabilitation.

House Bill 759 modifies Maryland Criminal Procedure § 8-110 to remove the October 1, 2021, date restriction. In 2021, the Juvenile Restoration Act (JUVRA) passed and created a mechanism where children who were under 18 at the time of a criminal offense could petition a judge for sentencing review after serving 20 years.<sup>1</sup> JUVRA limited this review mechanism to children who were sentenced prior to October 1, 2021.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> S.B. 494, 2021 Reg. Sess. (Md. 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Md. Crim. Pro. § 8-110(a)(2) (2024).

Last session, the Second Look Act expanded JUVRA's judicial review mechanism to include certain individuals who were ages 18 to 24 without imposing a date restriction for eligibility.<sup>3</sup> This has created an unconstitutional inconsistency, where the majority of individuals ages 18 to 24 receive an opportunity for review while youth under 18 sentenced after October 1, 2021, are ineligible for sentence review. The U.S. Supreme Court has decided a litany of cases over the last two decades which consistently affirm that children are different than adults for the purposes of criminal sentencing and which afford children greater constitutional protections in criminal sentencing than their adult counterparts.<sup>4</sup> Currently in Maryland, if a 15-year-old child and a 24-year-old individual were arrested as codefendants, in most situations the 24-year-old would receive sentencing review while the 15-year-old would not. This creates an unconstitutional framework where individuals over 18 receive greater protections than youth under 18, exposing the state to litigation risk.

House Bill 759 eliminates this disparity that disadvantages children by removing the arbitrary October 1, 2021, date restriction. House Bill 759 ensures that all children under 18, regardless of the date upon which they were sentenced, receive an opportunity for sentence review. Passing this simple technical fix would ensure fundamental fairness and constitutional compliance in criminal sentencing for youth under 18.

The Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth urges a **favorable reporting on House Bill 759**. Thank you for your serious consideration of this legislation.

Nikola Nable-Juris  
National Legal and Policy Director  
Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth

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<sup>3</sup> H.B. 853, 2025 Reg. Sess. (Md. 2025).

<sup>4</sup> *Roper v. Simmons*, 543 U.S. 551 (2005) (finding the death penalty unconstitutional for children under 18); *Graham v. Florida*, 560 U.S. 48 (2010) (finding life-without-parole sentences for non-homicide offenses to be unconstitutional for children under 18); *Miller v. Alabama*, 567 U.S. 460 (2012) (finding mandatory life-without-parole sentences unconstitutional for children under 18); *Montgomery v. Louisiana*, 577 U.S. 190 (2016) (holding *Miller v. Alabama* applies retroactively to children under 18 who were previously sentenced to life without parole); *Jones v. Mississippi*, 593 U.S. 98 (2021) (addressing sentencing procedure for youth while reaffirming the core tenants of *Miller* and *Montgomery*).

# **O. Moyd Testimony - HB 759 - Repeal SLA Sentencing**

Uploaded by: Olinda Moyd, Esquire

Position: FAV



**February 17, 2026  
House - Judiciary Committee**

**Testimony in Support of HB 759 – Criminal Procedure – Motion to Reduce  
Duration of Sentence – Repeal of Sentencing Date Limitation**

**Submitted by Olinda Moyd, Esq.**

The Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR) supports a favorable vote on HB 759. HB 759 is a simple bill that ensures fundamental fairness and compliance with the U.S. Constitution in sentencing review.

MAJR has supported legislation recently enacted providing resentencing mechanisms (JUVRA and SLA) and it is imperative that the law be applied equitably. In 2025, the General Assembly passed and the Governor signed into law the Maryland Second Look Act. Effective October 1, 2025, the Second Look Act amended CP § 8-110 to also allow certain individuals who have been imprisoned for at least 20 years for crimes that occurred when they were young adults (18-24) to file a motion to reduce their sentence if they meet the criteria. The legislation currently mandates that the individual be *sentenced for the offense before October 1, 2021*. The sentencing date limitation in the statute should be repealed to achieve fair and just sentencing opportunities for eligible individuals in Maryland.

The current legislation creates an unconstitutional inconsistency, where individuals ages 18 to 24 receive an opportunity for review only if they were sentenced before October 1, 2021, whereas individuals who were sentenced after this date do not. For example, if Mr. A and Mr. B are co-defendants and Mr. A was sentenced on September 30, 2021, and Mr. B was sentenced on October 2, 2021, Mr. A would be eligible for a sentencing review and, under the current legislation, Mr. B would not. After a decade and a half of U.S. Supreme Court jurisprudence emphasizing how children and young people are less culpable and more capable of change than adults for the purposes of criminal sentencing, it is contrary to Constitutional protections that individuals would be excluded merely based on a sentencing date limitation. Maryland laws must be fair and consistent to build societal trust, ensure equitable treatment, provide legal certainty and uphold respect for our criminal legal system.

HB 759 is a common-sense, straightforward technical fix to ensure these disparities don't exist. A meaningful opportunity for review should be available to all eligible individuals, regardless of when they were sentenced.

We urge a favorable reporting on HB 759. Thank you for your serious consideration of this legislation.

Olinda Moyd  
[moydlaw@yahoo.com](mailto:moydlaw@yahoo.com)  
[www.MA4jr.org](http://www.MA4jr.org)

**HB759\_FAV\_ACLUMD.pdf**

Uploaded by: Olivia Spaccasi

Position: FAV



## Testimony for the House Judiciary Committee

February 17, 2026

### HB 759 - Criminal Procedure - Motion to Reduce Duration of Sentence - Repeal of Sentencing Date Limitation

#### FAVORABLE

OLIVIA SPACCASI  
PUBLIC POLICY  
ANALYST

AMERICAN CIVIL  
LIBERTIES UNION  
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OFFICERS AND  
DIRECTORS  
Corey Stottlemyer  
PRESIDENT

DANA VICKERS  
SHELLEY  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ANDREW FREEMAN  
GENERAL COUNSEL

The ACLU of Maryland urges a favorable report on HB 759 which seeks to close existing gaps in resentencing policy after the passage of the Second Look Act of 2025 and the Juvenile Restoration Act of 2021. The Second Look Act, as enacted, applies to those who committed certain crimes between the ages of 18-24. The Juvenile Restoration Act (JRA), as enacted, abolishes life without the possibility of parole for those under the age of 18 and allows people that have served at least 20 years of their sentence and who committed crimes before the age of 18 and were sentenced prior to October 1, 2021 the opportunity to petition the court for a sentence modification. These transformative laws have provided new opportunities and new hope for many incarcerated people. However, the retrospective nature of the Juvenile Restoration Act means that there are currently no meaningful resentencing paths for those who commit crimes before the age of 18 after October 1 2021. HB 759 would provide a common sense, technical fix to ensure those most in need of sentencing review would have that opportunity, creating parity across resentencing opportunities in Maryland.

Brain development continues throughout adolescence and into adulthood. The section of the brain responsible for mature thought, emotional regulation, judgment, and reasoning develop last in the frontal lobes. Adolescents are more likely to act on impulse without considering consequences and use their brains in a way that differs from adults.<sup>1</sup> These trends are reflected in data around criminal behavior which overwhelmingly shows that people age out of crime. Criminal behavior generally peaks during the late teens and early 20s and falls sharply in the years after.<sup>2</sup>

Current law allows for the consideration of various factors in resentencing decisions for whom they currently apply. Among these are persons family and community circumstances at the time of the offense, including any history of trauma, abuse, or involvement in the child welfare system. For the cohort of individuals in question in HB 759 these factors are of particular relevance.

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<sup>1</sup> Grisso, T. "The Competence of Adolescents as Trial Defendants." *Psychology, Public Policy and Law*, 3:1, 1997.

<https://fammm.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Aging-out-of-crime-FINAL.pdf>

Bias in Maryland’s criminal justice system against indigent defendants and Black people occurs at every stage: from the initial arrest to sentencing. This bill is necessary to provide a path for those who committed crimes as children to challenge extreme, biased, or inappropriate sentences.

There is also opportunity for safer prison environments with the potential opportunity to reduce sentences, as a compelling incentive to comply with facility rules while serving their time. In other words—the possibility of earning a sentence reduction may incentivize good behavior and thereby improve safety in the facilities.<sup>3</sup>

This bill builds on existing resentencing reforms that Maryland has rightly adopted in recent years - reforms grounded in the recognition that people mature, take accountability, and transform their lives. This understanding is particularly relevant when thinking about young people. The Maryland Second Look Act and the JRA allow people the opportunity to demonstrate their rehabilitation in front of a judge. This opportunity should be afforded to all people, particularly those who committed crimes during their adolescence.

For the foregoing reasons, ACLU of Maryland urges a favorable report for HB 759.

AMERICAN CIVIL  
LIBERTIES UNION  
FOUNDATION OF  
MARYLAND

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<sup>3</sup> *Stouffer v. Staton*, 152 Md. App. 586, 592 (2003).

# **IPC Written Testimony HB 759 Favorable.pdf**

Uploaded by: Rachel Bennett

Position: FAV

**BILL:** House Bill 759

**FROM:** Maryland Office of the Public Defender (MOPD) Innocence Project Clinic at the University of Baltimore School of Law

**POSITION:** Favorable

**DATE:** February 13, 2026

The MOPD Innocence Project Clinic at the University of Baltimore School of Law respectfully requests that the Committee issue a favorable report on House Bill 759.

I am a member of the faculty and Director of the MOPD Innocence Project Clinic at the University of Baltimore School of Law, and an assistant public defender. I am writing to urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 759. The MOPD Innocence Project Clinic is a partnership between the Maryland Office of the Public Defender and the University of Baltimore School of Law. The MOPD Innocence Project Clinic represents wrongfully convicted individuals in legal challenges to their convictions and sentences. As an assistant public defender, I have also had the privilege of representing juvenile lifers, and more recently those who are eligible to seek release under the Second Look Act.

House Bill 759 makes a simple fix to correct an inconsistency in existing law. The Juvenile Restoration Act, codified in Criminal Procedure Article § 8-110, allows an individual who was under 18 years of age at the time of the offense to petition the court for a reduction of sentence based on demonstrated rehabilitation after having served at least 20 years' incarceration. The current statute allows an individual who was a minor at the time of the offense to file such a petition only if the sentence was imposed prior to October 1, 2021, the date that the Juvenile Restoration Act took effect. House Bill 759 removes this requirement so that people convicted as minors have the same opportunity to seek resentencing as eligible individuals who were between 18 and 25 at the time of the offense. Without this fix, the law paradoxically affords worse treatment to those individuals convicted as minors.

This fix is also important to avoid unfair inconsistencies when a court has granted postconviction relief to correct a legal error in a sentence on a later date. In such a case where the court corrected an error in sentencing after 2021, current law arbitrarily bars relief for that individual under the Juvenile Restoration Act.

House Bill 759 continues a policy that has proven successful. To understand that the Juvenile Restoration Act works, we only need to look as far as the remarkable narratives of

personal transformation of those granted release.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, studies of juvenile lifers released after lengthy sentences show notable achievements and low rates of rearrest.<sup>2</sup> This correction in the statutory language also brings Maryland in line with neighboring jurisdictions, including Washington, D.C., that similarly recognize the wisdom of taking a second look at lengthy sentences imposed upon youth.<sup>3</sup>

When I first began working with juvenile lifers, I was immediately struck by their personal drive to succeed and roles they had taken on in prison. Many served as mentors and tutors for fellow inmates enrolled in college or GED programs, or staffed the law library. They were entrusted by prison staff to oversee the sewing shops that make uniforms for correctional workers and the metal furniture workshops that supply state office buildings. Anyone who has had the good fortune to cross paths with former juvenile lifers, as I have, knows that when these individuals leave prison they bring home their remarkable drive to succeed. Many have become advocates for their communities, substance abuse counselors, and credible messengers to youth. They are working hard to make their communities stronger and safer.

For these reasons, I request this Committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 759.

Submitted by: Maryland Office of the Public Defender, Innocence Project Clinic at the University of Baltimore School of Law

Authored by: Rachel Bennett, Director  
MOPD Innocence Project Clinic at the University of Baltimore  
[rbennett@ubalt.edu](mailto:rbennett@ubalt.edu)

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<sup>1</sup> “The Juvenile Restoration Act: Year One –October 1, 2021 to September 30, 2022, Maryland Office of the Public Defender, October 2022, available at [https://opd.state.md.us/files/ugd/868471\\_e5999fc44e87471baca9aa9ca10180fb.pdf](https://opd.state.md.us/files/ugd/868471_e5999fc44e87471baca9aa9ca10180fb.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> “Life after life: Recidivism among individuals formerly sentenced to mandatory juvenile life without parole,” Sbeglia C, et.al. J Res Adolesc. 2025 March 35(1), <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11758475/>.

<sup>3</sup>D.C. Code Ann. § 24-403.03(a)(2023) (permitting a reduction of sentence for a crime committed before the defendant’s 25th birthday after having served 15 years upon a finding that the defendant is not a danger to the community and the interests of justice warrant modification).

# **FINAL 2026 MD HB 759 Testimony - Logan Seacrest.pd**

Uploaded by: Robert Melvin

Position: FAV



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*www.rstreet.org*

Testimony from:

Logan Seacrest, Resident Fellow, Criminal Justice and Civil Liberties, R Street Institute

In SUPPORT of HB 759, “Criminal Procedure – Motion to Reduce Duration of Sentence – Repeal of Sentencing Date Limitation”

February 17, 2026

House Judiciary Committee

Chairwoman Bartlett and members of the committee,

My name is Logan Seacrest, and I am a fellow in the Criminal Justice and Civil Liberties program at the R Street Institute, a nonprofit, nonpartisan public policy research organization. Our mission is to engage in policy research and outreach to promote free markets and limited, effective government. This is why the sentencing review provisions in HB 759 are of special interest to us.

We believe HB 759 is a necessary technical fix to ensure fundamental fairness and consistency in Maryland’s sentencing laws.

At present, Maryland statute creates an arbitrary distinction in eligibility for judicial review. While the law allows certain individuals between the ages of 18 and 24 at the time of their offense to petition for a sentence reduction, it excludes those who were under the age of 18 if they were sentenced after October 1, 2021.<sup>1</sup> This has created an inconsistency in the law, where young adults are afforded an opportunity for review that is denied to juveniles, despite the latter being less culpable under the law.<sup>2</sup>

For example, if a 15-year-old and a 24-year-old were arrested as co-defendants today, the 24-year-old would eventually be eligible for sentence review, while the 15-year-old would not. This discrepancy is not only constitutionally questionable, it represents a departure from the latest developmental science, indicating that higher levels neuroplasticity make rehabilitation more effective in young children than in

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<sup>1</sup> Md. Code Ann., Crim. Proc. § 8-110 (West 2021).

<sup>2</sup> *Roper v. Simmons*, Supreme Court of the United States, March 1, 2005, p. 569; *Miller v. Alabama*, Supreme Court of the United States, June 25, 2012, p. 471.



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adults.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, continuing to incarcerate individuals who have demonstrated decades of rehabilitation when they no longer pose a threat to public safety is an inefficient use of state resources.

A limited, effective government should ensure that its mechanism for reviewing sentences is applied logically and equitably, rather than based on an arbitrary date. HB 759 resolves this oversight by removing the date restriction, ensuring that a meaningful opportunity for review is available to all individuals who were under 18 at the time of their offense.

We respectfully ask the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 759.

Thank you for your time,

Logan Seacrest  
Resident Fellow  
Criminal Justice and Civil Liberties  
R Street Institute  
[lseacrest@rstreet.org](mailto:lseacrest@rstreet.org)

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<sup>3</sup> Lisa L. Weyandt et al., "Neuroplasticity in Children and Adolescents in Response to Treatment Intervention: A Systematic Review of the Literature," *Clinical and Translational Neuroscience* 4:2 (July 2020), p. 21.  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2514183X20974231>.

# **SaraCitroni\_Testimony HB759.pdf**

Uploaded by: Sara Citroni

Position: FAV

## 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.

**Sara Citroni**

Prepare for Parole and Reentry

[sara@prepare-parole.org](mailto:sara@prepare-parole.org)

# **HB 759 Testimony SLao.pdf**

Uploaded by: Serena Lao

Position: FAV

**House Bill 759 (Criminal Procedure – Motion to Reduce Duration of Sentence – Repeal of Sentencing Date Limitation)**  
**House Judiciary Committee**  
**Hearing Date: February 17, 2026**

**Position: FAVORABLE**

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

**I, Serena Lao, am submitting this testimony in support of HB 759.** My loved one was incarcerated for 37 years in Maryland prisons for a crime committed at the age of 16. The Juvenile Restoration Act (JRA) gave him and many others incredible hope when it passed in 2021, and every child who has spent at least 20 years incarcerated should have that same opportunity for a sentence *review* regardless of when they were sentenced.

This bill is a simple fix to legislation that is currently inconsistent and unfair. Right now, if a 15 year-old and a 24 year-old were arrested as co-defendants in a serious crime, the 24 year-old would be eligible for sentence review after 20 years, while the child would not be. We know that there is plenty of research on brain development showing that young minds have the greatest capacity to develop and change. This is true of a child that was sentenced before October 1, 2021, and it is still true of a child sentenced on or after October 1, 2021. Repealing this sentencing date limitation would serve as a beacon of hope for those who, right now, are making choices during their incarceration to act out in hopelessness or commit themselves to a better path and work towards the possibility of a second chance one day.

Our communities have seen the positive impact of those who were granted a second chance through the JRA. So many returning citizens are playing a crucial role in violence prevention through meaningful mentorship and community efforts to reduce crime. This is what prevents the creation of more victims—not locking children up and throwing away the key. This straightforward bill is crucial to continuing the trajectory of this positive trend for years to come.

Thank you for reading, and I urge you to vote **favorably** on **HB 759**.

Sincerely,



Serena Lao

**2026\_02\_17 HB 759 Motion to Reduce Duration of Sen**

Uploaded by: Tiffany Clark

Position: FAV

**CAROLYN A. QUATTROCKI**  
*Chief Deputy Attorney General*

**LEONARD J. HOWIE III**  
*Deputy Attorney General*

**CARRIE J. WILLIAMS**  
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*Chief of Staff*

**STATE OF MARYLAND**  
**OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL**

**ANTHONY G. BROWN**  
*Attorney General*

February 17, 2026

**TO:** The Honorable J. Sandy Bartlett  
Chair, Judiciary Committee

**FROM:** Tiffany Clark  
Director, Legislative Affairs, Office of the Attorney General

**RE:** House Bill 759 – Criminal Procedure - Motion to Reduce Duration of Sentence - Repeal of Sentencing Date Limitation (Support)

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The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) supports House Bill 759 – Criminal Procedure - Motion to Reduce Duration of Sentence - Repeal of Sentencing Date Limitation. House Bill 759 proposes to eliminate the October 1, 2021 effective date limitation in the Juvenile Restoration Act's sentence reduction provisions, ensuring consistent eligibility for all defendants who committed crimes while under age 18.

This legislation directly supports our efforts to ensure fairness and consistency in Maryland's criminal justice system, particularly regarding sentencing opportunities for individuals who committed offenses as juveniles.

When the Juvenile Restoration Act (JUVRA) was enacted in 2021, it created two distinct pathways based on sentencing date. For defendants sentenced on or after October 1, 2021, courts were not required to adhere to mandatory minimums and were prohibited from imposing life without parole under § 6-235 of the Criminal Procedure Article. For defendants sentenced before that date, JUVRA established a sentence reduction mechanism under § 8-110 of the Criminal Procedure Article available after the defendant had served at least 20 years. The date limitation making sentence reduction available only to juvenile defendants sentenced before October 1, 2021, was logical at the time because juvenile defendants sentenced after October 2021 would benefit from § 6-235's protections.

However, the passage of the Second Look Act in 2025 (2025 Md. Laws ch. 96) created an unintended incongruity. Under current law as established by the Second Look Act, defendants aged 18-25 at the time of their crime, regardless of their sentencing date, may seek a sentence reduction after serving 20 years under § 8-110. Yet defendants under age 18 who committed crimes after October 1, 2021 fall into a gap: they are excluded from the Second Look Act (which applies only to those over age 18) and from JUVRA's sentence reduction provisions (due to the date limitation). This results in the outcome that juvenile defendants now have fewer opportunities for sentence consideration than young adult defendants.

House Bill 759 corrects this inequity by removing the October 1, 2021 date restriction, ensuring that all defendants who were under 18 at the time of their offense have access to the sentence reduction process established by JUVRA. This creates appropriate parity with the Second Look Act's treatment of young adult defendants and reflects the General Assembly's recognition that individuals who commit offenses during adolescence warrant special consideration in sentencing.

We appreciate the General Assembly's work on this important issue and appreciate the opportunity to share our perspective. For the foregoing reasons, the Office of the Attorney General respectfully urges the Committee to give House Bill 759 **a favorable report**.

Cc:

**HB759\_SB162\_NAACP .docx.pdf**

Uploaded by: Willie Flowers

Position: FAV



# NAACP

*Howard County Branch*

*#7020*

**BILL: HB 759/SB 162**

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

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

Greetings Members of the General Assembly:

On behalf of the Maryland State Conference NAACP, we write in strong support of SB162 / HB759 – a straightforward, common-sense fix to ensure fairness and constitutional compliance in Maryland’s sentencing review laws.

The Maryland State Conference NAACP was a strong and vocal supporter of the Juvenile Restoration Act (JRA) in 2021. We supported that legislation because it recognized a fundamental principle: children are different from adults and must be treated differently under the law. The JRA aligned Maryland with longstanding U.S. Supreme Court precedent acknowledging the diminished culpability of youth and their unique capacity for growth and rehabilitation. It also addressed profound racial disparities. At the time of its passage, Maryland ranked first in the nation for the proportion of Black youth serving life without parole, and nearly 87 percent of those immediately eligible for relief under the JRA were Black.

Our support for SB162 / HB759 is in that same vein.

Following passage of the JRA, the Maryland Second Look Act expanded judicial review to include certain individuals who were ages 18 to 24 at the time of their offense. While that reform aimed to promote fairness, it unintentionally created an inconsistency in access to sentencing review for some individuals who were under 18 at the time of their offense.

This gap has serious implications for Black residents of our State – and particularly for Black youth. Racial disparities remain embedded at every stage of the criminal legal system, from arrest to charging to sentencing. Black children are more likely to be transferred to adult court, more likely to receive

NAACP Howard County Branch #7020 P.O. Box 622 Columbia, MD 21045

harsher sentences, and more likely to serve extreme terms of incarceration. When inconsistencies exist in sentencing review laws, they disproportionately affect Black youth and their families. Failing to correct these disparities perpetuates inequity and undermines the progress Maryland has worked to achieve.

SB162 / HB759 is a measured and necessary correction. It does not guarantee release. It does not eliminate judicial discretion. Courts will continue to evaluate each case individually, considering public safety, accountability, victim impact, and demonstrated rehabilitation. This bill simply ensures that all individuals who were under 18 at the time of their offense have access to a meaningful opportunity for review consistent with the principles Maryland has already endorsed.

The Maryland State Conference NAACP views this legislation as a logical fix of an inadvertent error— not a shift in policy direction. When implementation reveals gaps that disproportionately impact Black youth, responsible governance requires action. SB162 / HB759 strengthens Maryland's commitment to age-appropriate sentencing, constitutional consistency, and racial equity under the law.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge a favorable report on SB162 / HB759. Should you require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Respectfully,

Willie Flowers

President

NAACP Howard County Branch

Past President NAACP Maryland State Conference

[flowerswilliea@gmail.com](mailto:flowerswilliea@gmail.com)



## **Late Testimony**

Uploaded by: Victor D Stone

Position: UNF



Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc.

Continuing the Missions of the Stephanie Roper Committee and Foundation, Inc.

☎ 877-VICTIM-1 (877-842-8461) ✉ [mail@mdcrimevictims.org](mailto:mail@mdcrimevictims.org) 🌐 [mdcrimevictims.org](http://mdcrimevictims.org)

## LETTER IN OPPOSITION TO HOUSE BILL 0759

February 10, 2026

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### Carroll, Howard, & Baltimore Counties

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The Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center (MCVRC) urges an unfavorable vote on HB0759.

The 2021 Juvenile Restoration Act (JRA) permits youth convicted in adult court before October 2021 to petition for sentence reductions three times after serving 20 years. The only offenders not yet released after twenty years due to either parole or expiration of their sentences, one third of which is reduced by prison diminution credits, are those with 30 year or longer sentences. Those offenders were convicted and sentenced for violent murders. Therefore, this bill, which will make resentencing after twenty years available to prisoners not sentenced before October 2021, benefits only a narrow class of convicted violent murderers and does not address or remedy concerns about mass incarceration for a multitude of offenses during past decades. When the JRA passed, allowing remedial sentencing-modification hearings after twenty years of incarceration was not found appropriate by the General Assembly for post-2021 cases. The General Assembly recognized that after 2021 there were multiple reforms in case law, sentencing guidelines, and parole regulations addressing concerns about young offenders.

Adolescent neurodevelopment is a concept now fully embedded in Maryland sentencing. To pass HB0759 is to ignore that and make a choice to further disempower and ignore the pain of victims. By statute, victims are entitled to "a speedy disposition of the case" to minimize their trauma, Maryland Code, Criminal Procedure Article §11-1002(b)(13). Criminal Rule 4-345(e) only allows sentence modifications for 5 years, *State v. Thomas*, 488 Md. 456, 487 (2024). The Maryland Supreme Court observed in *Thomas, supra*, 488 Md. at 517,

"At some point, resolution—in and of itself—means more than whether that resolution is favorable. There is something to be said for finality and not constantly being kept in the dark. That finality respects not only a criminal defendant, but also the public, and equally important, a crime victim."

The Maryland Supreme Court reiterated these concerns in *Syed v. Lee*, 488 Md. 537, 605-608 (2024), stating: "Only with real finality can the victims of crime move forward knowing the moral judgment will be carried out." *Id.* at 556, 118 S.Ct. 1489. "To unsettle these expectations is to inflict a profound injury to the powerful and legitimate interest in punishing the guilty, an interest shared by the State and the victims of crime alike." *Id.* (internal quotation marks and citation omitted)." The 5-year time limitation affirmed in *Thomas, supra*, was reached by an agreement of all branches of the Maryland government in 2004, for alteration of a valid sentence and is constitutionally protected by Article 47 of the Maryland Declaration of Rights. Therefore, as the Maryland Supreme Court stated in *Syed, supra*,

victims' statutory protections such as these cannot lawfully be overridden by the General Assembly without a new constitutional amendment.

HB0759 disrespects victims and violates these judicial rulings and safeguards. Finality in sentencing provides essential closure, allowing surviving victim families of murderers to heal from unimaginable trauma. The cases to which this bill applies are virtually all violent heinous murders, because nearly all other convicted felons are paroled prior to spending twenty years in prison. Judicially reducing sentencing judgments like these murder sentences, decades later is unprecedented in law and forces victims to rip open their wounds, and to have to recount and relive their pain repeatedly for successor judges, at a time when the experts at the Maryland Parole Commission and the Governor's Pardon authority have not seen fit to release these individuals.

Unlike this bill, parole is considered by experts experienced in prison rehabilitation. In addition, parole from life sentences in murder cases, unlike court-imposed probation terms, does not terminate after five years a convicted offender's obligations to stay away from the crime victims, finish paying restitution, or to not commit new crimes on pain of parole revocation. But termination of these protections for crime victims and for society, unconstitutional absent a new constitutional amendment, are a result of the resentencing provided by this bill.

This bill, prioritizes offenders, who have chosen to execute other Maryland residents, over never-ending trauma to and protection for Maryland's victim families. It disrespects the neutral and experienced experts at the Maryland Parole Commission in favor of judges who are familiar with imposing sentences, but not with assessing in hindsight after twenty years the nuances of an offender's prison behavior where his conduct has been constrained. Resentencing presents successor judges who have had no first-hand knowledge of the offender or the case with offender-selected experts who typically favor release of every prisoner after two decades. In the history of the common law tradition governing criminal punishment, no valid adverse legal judgments of any kind can be reduced twenty years later, and certainly not as allowed by this law, at a time selected by a convicted offender and repeatedly, allowing that offender to judge-shop among the successor judges. Allowing judge shopping by offenders, which results here in eliminating crime victim protections and obligations, is strictly prohibited in other contexts by court rules and is contrary to due process of law and sound public policy.

As the nation's largest nonprofit providing legal representation to crime victims, MCVRC speaks for Maryland survivors, and especially for the survivors of homicide. We urge an unfavorable vote on HB0759, which is unconstitutional and which ignores victims' suffering and the robust protections already in place.

Sincerely,

*Victor D Stone*

Victor D. Stone, Appellate Division Chief

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Joined by: Joanna Mupanduki, Deputy Director & Kurt Wolfgang, Executive Director