

MARYLAND ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE REFORM

Working to end unnecessary incarceration and build strong, safe communities



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14 February 2017

House Judiciary Committee
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Bill Numbers: HB723/SB694

The states of Maryland, California, and Oklahoma are the three remaining states that require gubernatorial approval for parole release of persons sentenced to a parole-eligible sentence. Even after the Parole Commission makes an independent merit-based determination of parole suitability, the Governor's approval is still required.

A number of persons have reached, or exceeded the sentencing limits of the judges who imposed their parole-eligible life terms or other lengthy sentences years ago. Despite the rehabilitative efforts made by these same prisoners, parole has become elusive in the State of Maryland.

The governor should not be put in a position that puts his reputation so directly on the line. The parole process is well understood, and by reaffirming that process this committee can assure a triple win: it will reassert the rule of law; it will relieve the governor of potential accusations; and it will give hope to many valuable citizens to return to productive civilian lives.

Now is the time for the Maryland General Assembly to remove the Governor from the parole process to prevent further distortion of the parole process. With merit-based re-entry, the Maryland Parole Commission would continue to be able to determine parole suitability.

We **support** this legislation and urge that this committee consider HB723/SB694 favorably.

Respectfully,

James Rose for the
Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR)