



Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform

Dear Delegate

Support HB0003/SB0202 - Correctional Services - Parole - Life Imprisonment

As your constituent I am writing to ask you to ensure that the Governor be removed from the parole process.

Parole, which is supposed to be one avenue for release, has been a mere fantasy for many men and women serving life sentences. Despite having worked hard to transform their lives, the door has been shut in their faces because parole for lifers has become political.

Unlike Maryland, Governors in 47 other states do not have veto power over the parole process. Judges in Maryland are aware that life sentences with possible parole are legally and morally different than "life without parole" sentences—but our Governors' actions for years nullified the statutory difference by inaction.

Maryland parole commissioners—most of whom have law-enforcement background and all of whom are appointed by the Governor—are carefully trained to make appropriate parole decisions without political pressure. Applying best practices and professional experience they are best able to discern which parolees who are least likely to pose a risk to public safety.

Furthermore elderly inmates cost two to three more than the normal \$40,000 per year per person due to extensive medical costs – and these taxpayer funds that better could be used to treat and rehabilitate youthful offenders who otherwise may continue to pose a risk to our communities without treatment.

As demonstrated by Maryland's Unger population and national statistics, the likelihood of recidivism for elderly inmates drops to approximately 1%. No real public safety issue would be posed by this legislation, particularly with the scientific-screening now used by Maryland's Parole Commission.

Most important is this moral reason: Governors' uniform parole rejection of every individual with a life sentence deprives every individual of hope. David Blumberg, chair of Maryland's Parole Commission has stated that such absence of hope may increase the "threat of violence" to correctional officers as lifers have no longer an incentive to behave.

We are asking that every person serving a life with the possibility of parole sentence be given a meaningful opportunity for parole that fosters hope.

Please vote to pass this bill to restore hope and open the pathway for persons who have transformed their lives to exit this system.

Sincerely,