



Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform

Dear Governor Hogan,

Maryland's General Assembly has passed a bill (SB 202) that would bring Maryland's parole laws in line with that of 47 other U.S. states. Based on years of study and reasonable, bipartisan compromises, SB 202 would offer Marylanders many benefits:

- 1) For Marylanders with life sentences that, by law, include the possibility of parole, it would give real hope to motivate them to change their lives.
- 2) It would make Maryland prisons safer. 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.
- 3) Crucially, it would depoliticize our State's parole process. Parole for lifers years ago became politicized in Maryland with Governor Glendening's "Life-means-life" slogan during the heat of a campaign. Former Gov. Glendening since has called this policy "a mistake," a "lose-lose" proposition, and "a power that future Governors should not want to have."
- 4) It would help to modernize Maryland's parole system and bring it into the mainstream with other States. Unlike Maryland, Governors in 47 other states do not have such veto power over the parole process.
- 5) SB 202 makes common sense in ensuring that "life sentences with possible parole" should be legally and morally different than "life without parole" sentences—but Maryland Governors' actions for years nullified the statutory difference.
- 6) Public safety still would be well-protected. Maryland parole commissioners—most with law-enforcement background and all appointed by the Governor—are carefully trained and supported by scientific prisoner assessments to make appropriate parole decisions without political pressure that also ensure public safety.
- 7) SB 202 would save taxpayer funds now unnecessarily spend on elderly prisoners. Elderly inmates cost two to three more than the normal \$40,000 per year per person due to extensive medical costs. If an inmate cost \$80,000 per year for 10 (unnecessary) years, for example, that adds up to \$800,000. As demonstrated by Maryland's Unger population and national statistics, the likelihood of recidivism for elderly inmates drops to approximately 1%.
- 8) These taxpayer funds that better could be used for many other purposes that genuinely serve the interests of public safety – for example, to treat and rehabilitate youthful offenders who otherwise may continue to pose a risk to our communities without treatment.

For all these reasons, I respectfully ask that you NOT veto SB 202 and that you permit its bipartisan-negotiated depoliticization of Maryland's parole system for those whose life sentences permit possible parole.

Sincerely,