

# Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform

Working together for a criminal justice system that better serves our communities



## Testimony in opposition to HB463: First Degree Murder—Diminution Credits—Prohibition

**Judith Lichtenberg**  
**On behalf of the Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform**  
**February 27, 2026**

I submit this testimony today on behalf of the Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform in strong opposition to HB463. I'm professor emerita of philosophy at Georgetown University, and I've been teaching philosophy in the University of Baltimore's Pell Grant college program at Jessup Correctional Institution for ten years. (I've also taught at Patuxent and at the DC Jail.)

This bill would prohibit incarcerated people who are serving first degree murder sentences from receiving diminution credits that could reduce their sentences. The bill is wrongheaded for at least two reasons. First, it ignores everything we know about the power of education to reduce recidivism. (See, for example, the RAND Corporation's work on correctional education.) Second, it expresses an unfortunate and unjustified attitude about the ability of people to transform their lives and their characters. As a longtime teacher in the Maryland correctional system, I have witnessed firsthand the powerful effects of education and critical thinking on my students.

Our prisons hold too many people, costing the state funds that should be invested in preventing crime rather than incarceration. When people *are* incarcerated, we should do everything we can to enable them to lead productive lives in the community. We know that education is one of the best ways to do this, and we should give all people in prison every incentive to pursue it. For these reasons, we urge an unfavorable report on this bill. Thank you.

The Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR) is an all-volunteer, nonpartisan organization of about 2,000 people statewide who advocate for evidence-based reforms to Maryland's criminal justice system.

Sincerely,

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