



SB14 - Support

February 2, 2021

Senator Will Smith
Chair, Judicial Proceedings
Miller Senate Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Compensation to Individual Erroneously Convicted, Sentenced, and Confined (The Walter Lomax Act)

Dear Chairman Smith and Committee Members:

As the State's Attorney for Baltimore City, I support Senate Bill 14 which would alter Maryland's compensation law to be effective in compensating the wrongfully convicted and providing them with the funding to re-enter society as innocent citizens not punished for a lifetime for crimes they did not commit.

Maryland currently has no mechanism to guarantee compensation to those who were wrongfully convicted. Leaving it in the hands of the Board of Public Works often politicizes decisions that need not be so complicated. Any payments made to wrongfully convicted individuals today are discretionary.

Over the past six years, the need for this reform has become apparent through the work of our Conviction Integrity Unit with the Baltimore State's Attorney's Office. Since the start of my administration, we have released ten individuals who were wrongfully accused, convicted, and incarcerated for a cumulative of almost 275 years in jail. Though there is no way to repair the damage done to these individuals, this bill begins to set the path right and offer a future with financial compensation for being wrongfully convicted.

Nationally, thirty-five states, the federal government, and Washington DC have codified exoneree compensation laws that provide a straightforward path for wrongfully convicted people to receive financial justice. Maryland's law is out of step with the rest of the nation. Structural flaws exist when our exonerees are waiting, in some cases years, for financial justice.

This bill does not right all of the wrongs that wrongfully convicted individuals have already had to face, but it does provide exonerees with timely and guaranteed compensation for years of their lives lost that they will never get back.

For these reasons, I urge a favorable vote on Senate Bill 14.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Marilyn J. Mosby".

Marilyn J. Mosby
State's Attorney for Baltimore City