

Bill No: HB0003

Title: Parole Reform

Committee: Judiciary/Judicial Proceedings

Hearing Date: 1-18-2021

Position: SUPPORT

We are the families of incarcerated individuals sentenced to life imprisonment with the possibility of parole. We believe that the Governor should not play a role in the parole process in Maryland. We urge a favorable report on this bill.

We support this bill because it would decrease the number of reformed individuals who remain incarcerated and it would bring our family members home to us. We have lived without our family members for years and have missed out on countless milestones and memories with our loved ones because of the Governor's refusal to grant parole to many lifers who have been approved for parole by the Maryland Parole Commission, even when they have few, if any, infractions while incarcerated and have shown evidence of significant rehabilitation.

Maryland is one of only three states that includes the Governor in its decisions to grant parole. The politicization of the process for releasing rehabilitated incarcerated individuals has kept our family members in prison longer than they deserve. The process gives the Governor far too much power in making these decisions; it leaves the Maryland Parole Commission essentially powerless. From Governor Glendening's declaration that "life means life" in 1994 to Governor Hogan's refusal to parole lifers approved by the Maryland Parole Commission today, denying parole to lifers has been based on the false and offensive narrative that our family members cannot be rehabilitated. This is untrue and leaves our incarcerated loved ones and our families feeling hopeless and incomplete.

We are Maryland residents, taxpaying constituents of the members of this Judicial Proceedings Committee. The people we love are stuck in this stagnant, unjust system. They do not deserve to die in prison. We do not deserve to watch our loved ones live out their days in prison after being promised true and meaningful consideration at parole. Our loved ones are being resentenced de facto to death by incarceration. It is unfair to our family members and it is unfair to us.

We, the families of incarcerated lifers in Maryland, strongly urge the passage of this parole reform bill.

Shelley Gregory

Yolanda Scott

Roger Gregory

William Lyons