



Public Defender Testifies In Support of Proposal to Allow Courts to Reduce Sentences for Rehabilitated Prisoners After They Have Served a Lengthy Period of Time

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This afternoon, the Director of the Maryland Office of the Public Defender’s Decarceration Initiative, Brian Saccenti, will [testify in favor of a proposed rule change](#) that would permit judges to reduce sentences for (a) people convicted of crimes committed when they were under the age of 25 who have served at least 15 to 24 years (depending on the length of their sentence), and (b) people who are age 60 or older and have served at least 15 years of their sentence. The rule change was proposed by the Judiciary’s Rules Committee. The Court of Appeals is holding a [hearing on the proposed change at 1:00pm today](#).

“The proposed rule change provides an opportunity for judges to review how individuals who have served lengthy periods of incarceration used that time and whether continued imprisonment is appropriate,” explained Saccenti. “If adopted, this change will allow judges to take into account the efforts a person has made while incarcerated, and release rehabilitated individuals after they’ve served a lengthy period of incarceration. This will make prisons safer for staff and prisoners by incentivizing good behavior. It will make society better by allowing rehabilitated people to contribute to their communities. And it will allow correctional authorities to divert the resources they are now spending on locking up non-dangerous people to programs and initiatives that improve public safety.”

“The proposed rule focuses on individuals who are statistically much less likely to reoffend,” Saccenti added. “At a moment when society is reckoning with the damage wrought by mass incarceration and the appalling racial disparities in whom we lock up, this rule change allows judges to address these problems by reducing the sentences of individuals who have served a lengthy period of time and can now be safely released.”

The Decarceration Initiative is a new project of the Office of the Public Defender established to address the urgent need to reduce the number of people in Maryland who remain incarcerated after serving a lengthy prison term and showing evidence of rehabilitation and a low risk of dangerousness.

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