

MARYLAND CURE

Maryland CURE
P O Box 1541
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www.marylandcure.org



From Your President



What a year this has been. Here I am speaking at Maryland Reentry Roundtable with the Keynote Speaker Secretary Robert Green, Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services,

We had high hopes to influence the passage of numerous legislative bills this year and testified on several. Then with COVID-19, the legislative session came to a screeching halt. We all in Maryland CURE are so aware of the enormous hardships that you have endured being locked down and isolated in your institutions

In this issue, we are discussing the issues that are important for us to influence – COVID-19 in prisons and jails, parole for lifers, solitary confinement, correctional education, felony murder rule, establishing a Maryland Correctional Ombudsman, parole reform in general, and creating a Maryland Second Look Act.

I also want to again remind you to continue to support Maryland CURE financially by your annual dues and any donation you are able to make. Maryland CURE is a volunteer-run organization and the money we collect is used mostly to produce this newsletter for you. We are in dire need.

Most Sincerely,

Lea Green

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COVID-19 -- Make Your Voice Heard

The way to influence prison reform is to contact your elected officials. To find out who they are, use this link: <https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials>

The following is an example and a recommendation for you or your loved ones to send to our Governor.

Dear Governor Hogan,

I urge you to reduce the prison population and prevent overcrowding and

- Release elderly and vulnerable people to reduce overcrowding.
- Release people in jail who are held pretrial and who do not pose an unreasonable safety risk.
- Release pregnant women.
- Reduce admissions into prisons and unnecessary incarceration.
- Reduce the jail populations by releasing all people held on probation and parole technical violation detainers or sentences.
- Reduce the jail population by not making new custodial arrests for any crimes that do not pose an unreasonable safety risk to a specific person or persons.
- Expedite the release of anyone close to their release date.

Sincerely, Your name and address

Send to: Governor Larry Hogan, 100 State Circle,
Annapolis, MD 21401

Parole for Lifers

In the State of Maryland, the Governor must approve the parole of a lifer, unlike 47 other US States. This year, once again, legislation was prosed to remove the Governor. Currently in all the institutions, men and women with life sentences feel as though they have no chance of release even though they have been infraction-free and have completed all training programs available to them. Many have been waiting for 30, 40, and some 50 years for a second chance.

HB 300 was s sponsored by 21 Delegates and SB 817 was sponsored by 14 Senators to remove the Governor from the parole process. Prior to the COVID-19 closing of the legislative session, the hearings were progressing with lots of enthusiasm and promise for finally getting this over the finish line. The House Bill was passed. The session was cancelled before the Senate Bill could move. Many prison reform groups, including Maryland CURE, testified passionately for passage.

Next year, we will return with equal passion and determination to make this change a reality.

Solitary Confinement (Restrictive Housing)

Restrictive housing is any form of physical separation in which the inmate is placed in a locked room or cell for approximately 22 hours or more out of a 24-hour period. This includes administrative segregation and disciplinary segregation.

This year, several bills were introduced. One prohibits direct release of a person from solitary to the public community. It requires a preparation program to be implemented before release. This bill was gathering support in the House. The other bill prohibits placing seriously mentally ill in solitary only as a last resort and limits it to no more than 15 consecutive days. These bills will be reintroduced next year.

Correctional Education

For the past several years, including this one, a Diminution Credits Bill was introduced, which recognizes and rewards the person who has completed a specific course with a specific large number of diminution credits that reduces the sentence length. Next year, the bill will be introduced again.

Felony Murder Rule

SB 919 was a bill to revise or at least require a commission's study of Maryland's antiquated felony-murder rule (a legal fiction exposing unwitting accomplices to life sentences). The bill passed the Senate but ran out of time in the House.

Maryland Correctional Ombudsman Initiative

With other person reform groups, we pushed for a bill that would address accountability oversight of the prison facilities by an independent group. The group would the authority to enter any facility at any time and talk to anyone as needed. It would be responsible for:

- Investigating complaints related to incarcerated persons' health, safety, welfare, and rights;
- Providing information to incarcerated persons and families regarding self-advocacy;
- Identifying and publicizing system issues; and
- Monitoring and ensuring compliance of the DOC with relevant statutes, rules, and policies regarding the treatment of incarcerated persons under the jurisdiction of the DOC.

Parole Reform in General

This year, we will be working with other prison reform group to change the risk assessment, increase accountability, address delays and failure to conduct hearings as well as other inefficiencies. We feel strongly that parole should be based solely on how someone has done their time and whether they are a risk to society, and not the nature of the crime.

Maryland Second Look Act

Both the House and the Senate were considering bills (HB323/SB591) that would allow anyone who has served a specific number of years (15+) to be able to request that his/her case be reviewed to determine if the sentence can be reduced. Many other States have this provision. We support it enthusiastically.

TO ACHIEVE YOUR DREAMS

Remember Your ABC's

Avoid negative sources, people, places, and things.

Believe in yourself.

Consider things from every angle.

Don't give up.

Enjoy life today, tomorrow may never come.

Family and friends are hidden treasure, seek them.

Give more than you planned to.

Hang on to your dreams.

Ignore those who try to discourage you.

Just do it.

Keep trying no matter hard it seems.

Love yourself.

Make it happen.

Never cheat or steal; always strike a fair deal.

Open your eyes and see things as they really are.

Practice makes perfect.

Quitters never win, and winners never quit.

Read, study and learn about things important in your life.

Stop procrastinating.

Take control of your own destiny.

Understand yourself in order to better understand others.

Visualize it.

Want it more than anything.

Xcellerate your efforts.

You are unique of all God's creation, nothing can replace you.

Zero in on your target and go for it.

Maryland Prisoners' Rights Coalition

"We work directly with incarcerated clients and their families to advocate for individual needs. These services include but are not limited to: healthcare, basic needs, disability rights, assistance and guidance through the process and policies within the facility and systemically access to visitation, phone calls, property, etc."

PO Box 386, Thurmont MD 21788
marylandprisonersrights@gmail.com

Next Year's Legislative Agenda

The Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform, which we are a member of, is a nonpartisan association of over fifty community organizations and churches with members in every part of the state, formed to support justice reinvestment. Individual supporters include judges, attorneys, corrections professionals, as well as returning citizens, victims and service providers.

The group is developing their agenda for the 2021 Legislative Session. We would like to hear directly from those who are imprisoned and from families, friends and supporters the initiatives that you would like to see proposed to the Maryland General Assembly.

Send your ideas to: Ms. Olinda Moyd
 Behind the Walls issues
 Post Office Box 1482
 Bowie, MD 30717

This is an opportunity to have our voices heard!



Justice Reinvestment

"Justice Reinvestment" was conceived with the intent to reduce corrections populations and budgets in order to generate savings for the purpose of reinvesting in high incarceration communities to make them safer, stronger, more prosperous and equitable. The idea is to divest, invest and redress - to redirect and reallocate the money to communities in need. We strongly support this!

Please remember to send us an email if you're able to receive newsletters via email.

This helps us reduce the cost of our newsletters!

Send us an email at marylandcure@gmail.com

www.marylandcure.org

Maryland CURE is a 501-C-3 tax exempt Chapter of CURE, a national grass-roots organization dedicated to reducing crime through reform of the criminal justice system.



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Please don't forget to submit your annual dues and donations if you can!

Dues for Membership

- Prisoners \$5 (or 10 stamps)
- Individual \$25
- Family \$25
- Life \$100

All donations are tax deductible!

www.marylandcure.org
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It is certain, in any case, that ignorance, allied with power, is the most ferocious enemy justice can have.

James Baldwin



I have always found that mercy bears richer fruits than strict justice. Abraham Lincoln

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FIRST LAST INMATE#
ORGANIZATION
STREET ADD1
STREET ADD 2
CITY, STATE ZIP