



The **CAMPAIGN** for the
FAIR SENTENCING
of **YOUTH**

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MARYLAND PASSES JUVENILE RESTORATION ACT, BANNING LIFE WITHOUT PAROLE FOR CHILDREN IN THE STATE

The bill will grant sentencing review to those Marylanders who were handed extreme sentences under the age of 18

Monday, April 12, 2021, Washington, DC — On Saturday, April 10, 2021, in a critical advancement for the state of Maryland and for the national youth sentencing reform movement, the Maryland legislature overrode a misguided gubernatorial veto to make the [Juvenile Restoration Act \(SB 494\)](#) law. The new law grants sentencing review to Marylanders who were under the age of 18 at the time of their offense and prohibits children from being sentenced to life without the possibility of parole.

Maryland joins its neighbors Delaware, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia in abolishing the practice of sentencing children to die in prison, and becomes the [25th state](#) in the country to ban it. Thirty-one states now either prohibit life without parole for children or have [no one serving the sentence](#). The bipartisan bill, which was sponsored by Republican Senator Chris West and Democratic Delegate Jazz Lewis, will provide an opportunity for review to over 400 people in Maryland who were convicted of crimes they committed as children.

“Any human being who reaches his 37th birthday is a different person than he was at the age of 17. We all know that from our own experiences. Teenagers act irresponsibly, some terribly irresponsibly. But people can change as they grow up,” says Senator West. “Redemption is possible. When this happens, as a society we should rejoice. Keeping someone in jail who committed a teenage crime, who has spent over half his life in jail and who has transformed his life and is no longer a threat to society is hard to defend.”

“The Juvenile Restoration Act is a critical step towards the transformational reform of our justice system,” says Delegate Lewis. “We can no longer be sentencing children to die in prison, a practice that targets children of color at a vastly disproportionate rate. Over 82 percent of juveniles charged as adults for life and life-equivalent sentences in Maryland are Black. The fact of the matter is that these sentences are reserved almost exclusively for Black children.”

Preston Shipp, Senior Policy Counsel at the Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth (CFSY), adds that, “Maryland has the highest proportion of Black youth sentenced to life without parole in the nation, so the Juvenile Restoration Act is a critical step in addressing our country’s worst racial disparity of this kind. Moreover, we’ve seen an incredible uptick in state legislatures banning life without parole for kids, and until now, Maryland has been woefully out of step with that national trend toward youth sentencing reform. Children must be held accountable for their actions, but because they are fundamentally different from adults in their ability to assess risk and consequences, and their unique capacity for change, they should be held accountable in age-appropriate ways with a focus on rehabilitation and reintegration into society.”

“This was the result of a broad coalition working together for justice,” says Crystal Carpenter, Chief Advocacy & Engagement Manager at the CFSY. “It would not have happened without our amazing ICAN members, the loved ones of those serving lengthy sentences, and without the partnership of organizations like [Deep Forgiveness](#), and other individuals who are either survivors of or have lost loved ones to youth violence. We are grateful for them lending their voice to this fight.”

The coalition of organizations and partners that worked together to pass this legislation also includes: Sponsors Chris West and Jazz Lewis, [the Responsible Business Initiative for Justice](#), the Players Coalition, Verizon, [Ben & Jerry’s](#), [the Body Shop](#), Maryland Attorney General Brian Frosh, Baltimore City State’s Attorney Marilyn Mosby, [Prince George’s County State’s Attorney Aisha Braveboy](#), Alyssa Milano, Jon Cryer, [the Montgomery County Women’s Democratic Club](#), [the Justice Policy Institute](#), Lila Meadows, Maryland Family Support Network, Martina Hazelton, [Human Rights for Kids](#), [Advocates for Children and Youth](#), John King ([Strong Future Maryland](#)), [Maryland Catholic Conference](#), [Maryland Justice Project](#), Rabia Chaudry, and the [Maryland Juvenile Justice Coalition](#).

For more information, or if you would like to arrange an interview, please contact Karmah Elmusa at karmah@cfsy.org | 202-341-9500.

[The Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth](#) is a nonprofit that leads efforts to ban life-without-parole and other extreme sentences for children, and supports those incarcerated as children who are released after serving long sentences.