DAVE PAGEL
STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Carol Howes
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Chairman Jones and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to express my support for House Bill 5273, which would eliminate the power of successor sentencing judges to veto the Parole Board's consideration to release prisoners serving parolable life sentences.

My name is Carol Howes. I was the warden of prisons in Coldwater for over 27 years prior to my retirement in 2012. My involvement in criminal justice issues began in 1973 when I started working for a State legislator who was chair of what was then the House Corrections Committee.

I personally know many parolable lifers who have served decades in prison. They have completed recommended therapy programs, earned vocational certificates and sometimes college degrees. They have gone decades with good conduct and are role models for other prisoners. In other words, they are excellent candidates for parole. I shared their disappointment when a successor judge objected to parole and arbitrarily stopped the process. Most successor judges had no direct knowledge of the case and none ever contacted me to inquire about the prisoner's progress.

Passage of HB 5273 would enable the Parole Board to consider the entire case from the offense to objections from the judge, prosecutor and victims to the prisoner's psychological evaluation, rehabilitation, outside support and future plans.

As a taxpayer, I am saddened by the growing number of aging and infirm prisoners house in Level II prisons. They are no longer a threat to the public and they mirror nursing home residents. I wholeheartedly support the release of parolable lifers who are willing and able to contribute to society rather than become a future burden on the criminal justice system.

Thank you for your consideration.

Carol Howes
MDOC Warden, Retired