New law could give second chance to juveniles serving life

Posted by Alan Van Wormer On 02/09/2018

ANNAPOLIS, Md. – On Feb. 9, Governor Larry Hogan signed Executive Order 01.01.2018.06, which confirms and requires that the governor weigh certain factors when considering a decision regarding parole for a juvenile offender serving a life sentence to ensure that these offenders have a meaningful opportunity for release.

“Since taking office, our administration has sought to bring balance to Maryland’s criminal justice system, which includes offering individuals who have paid their debt to society a second chance to live productive lives,” said Governor Hogan. “The policies that we have been following, which are now made law through this executive order, will help us achieve a proper balance between public safety and our administration’s goal of helping ex-offenders successfully reenter the community.”

Specifically, the order requires that the governor consider the juvenile’s age at the time of the crime and the lesser culpability of juvenile offenders compared to adult offenders. The order also requires that an offender’s demonstrated maturity and rehabilitation since the crime be considered when deciding whether to approve or disapprove a Maryland Parole Commission parole recommendation for a juvenile serving a life sentence.

Further, in order to ensure that parole considerations by the governor are consistent and structured, the order also requires the governor to consider the same factors that the Parole Commission considers for all individuals serving life sentences. If the governor disapproves parole for an inmate serving a life sentence, he will issue a written decision to the Maryland Parole Commission confirming that all of the required considerations were weighed.

This order codifies current Hogan administration practice for parole considerations. Since taking office in January 2015, the Hogan administration has paroled two individuals with life sentences and commuted seven others with life sentences.

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