



# NAACP

Maryland  
STATE CONFERENCE

March 27, 2024  
Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

## HB 627 - Election Law - Automatic Voter Registration - State Correctional Facilities

Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland NAACP to offer our strong support for HB 627, sponsored by Delegate Wilkins. This bill holds significant promise for advancing the fundamental rights of individuals reentering society after incarceration by ensuring their access to the ballot box through automatic voter registration upon release from State correctional facilities.

The right to vote is the cornerstone of democracy, serving as the most fundamental expression of citizenship. However, for too long, systemic barriers have impeded the ability of certain communities, particularly those impacted by the criminal justice system, to fully exercise this constitutional right. Despite serving their time and completing their sentences, individuals reentering society face numerous challenges, including barriers to voter registration and disenfranchisement, which undermine their ability to participate fully in the democratic process.

HB 627 presents a crucial opportunity to address this issue head-on by designating the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services as an automatic voter registration agency. By requiring the Department to register qualified individuals to vote upon their release from confinement, this legislation ensures that those who have paid their debt to society are not further penalized by being excluded from the democratic process. Furthermore, by mandating the implementation of an automatic voter registration system by January 1, 2025, HB 627 demonstrates a commitment to timely and effective action in expanding access to the franchise.

The importance of this legislation cannot be overstated. By facilitating voter registration for individuals reentering society, HB 627 not only upholds the principles of fairness and equality but also fosters civic engagement and reintegration. Voting is not only a right but also a responsibility and a means of empowerment. By participating in the electoral process, individuals can shape the policies and decisions that directly impact their lives and communities. Moreover, by having a stake in the democratic process, individuals are more likely to become active and engaged members of society, contributing to its overall health and vitality.

In conclusion, the Maryland NAACP urges the Committee to support HB 627 and take decisive action to ensure that all eligible individuals, including those reentering society after incarceration, have the opportunity to exercise their right to vote. By enacting this legislation, Maryland can lead the way in promoting fairness, justice, and democracy for all its residents. Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

In Service,

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