



Testimony for the Ways and Means Committee

February 13th, 2024

HB627- Election Law – Automatic Voter Registration – State Correctional Facilities

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Favorable

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The ACLU of Maryland urges a favorable report on HB 627, a bill that would designate the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) as an automatic voter registration agency, would require the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to register to vote, those individuals eligible, upon release of confinement from a state correctional facility.

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HB 627 furthers the goal of enfranchisement for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated persons that this legislature supported by passing the Value My Vote Act in 2021, ensuring that those incarcerated individuals who were not convicted of felonies or were awaiting trial would be aware of their right to vote. Designating DPSCS as an automatic voter registration agency and requiring the department to register qualified individuals upon release will increase participation among a formerly disenfranchised population of voters.

Increased Voting Participation

Data shows that having an automatic voting registration system in place will increase the percentage of new voting registrations. HB627 would mandate that DPSCS establish a system by January 1, 2025. A study from the Brennan Center for Justice states:

“Maryland observed a spike in its registration rate at MVA offices after implementing electronic registration. Between November 2008 and

November 2010, the two years preceding the introduction of electronic registration, Motor Vehicle Administration offices produced [61.2%](#) of all new voter registrations. That figure rose to [80%](#) between November 2012 and November 2014, the first time the state had electronic registration during the run-up to a midterm election.”¹

If Maryland is serious about empowering formerly incarcerated persons to vote, measures like HB627 are necessary.

We urge a favorable report on HB627.

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¹ <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/vrm-states-maryland>

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