



Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services

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BILL: HOUSE BILL 627

POSITION: LETTER OF INFORMATION

EXPLANATION: This bill includes the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services in the definition of an “applicable transaction” and designates the Department as an “automatic voter registration agency”. The bill further requires the Department to implement an automatic voter registration system to register individuals to vote upon release.

COMMENTS:

- The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services’ Division of Correction operates 13 State correctional facilities housing offenders sentenced to periods of incarceration for 18 months and longer. The Department also oversees five facilities located in Baltimore City that houses pretrial detainees and incarcerated individuals sentenced to incarceration for periods of 18 months and less.
- The Department understands the importance of voting and is committed to ensuring all eligible voters incarcerated in State correctional facilities are afforded the right to vote and that each eligible voter has access to voter material, including registration applications and mail in ballot request forms.
- HB 627 includes the Department in the definition of “applicable transaction” and further designates the Department as an automatic voter agency and to utilize an automatic system to register individuals to vote upon release.
- The Department has a robust voter program in place and works collaboratively with the State Board of Elections and the local boards to facilitate voting for eligible incarcerated individuals in State correctional facilities.
- The Department ensures election notices, deadlines, and promotional information to advise incarcerated individuals of voter eligibility requirements, right to request a voter registration are posted

throughout the correctional facilities and are also available to incarcerated individuals through case management.

- Restoration of voting rights notices are also posted throughout each correctional facility to inform ineligible incarcerated individuals of their eligibility to vote upon release. In addition, this information is included in every incarcerated individual's release packet, along with voter registration information and forms.
- Existing applicable transactions agencies have online applications in which a registration application can be included with. Applicable transaction includes any transaction that is completed online. The Department does not utilize an online process for release, as such, an automatic voter registration system would need to be developed.
- There would be a considerable fiscal impact on the Department as modifications to the Offender Case Management System would be required in order to allow case managers to inquire about voter registration of each individual upon release.

CONCLUSION: The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services respectfully urges the Committee to consider this information as it deliberates on House Bill 627.