

HB0115_RichardKaplowitz_FAV

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Richard Keith Kaplowitz

Frederick, MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON HB#/0115- POSITION: FAVORABLE

Election Law - Individuals Released From State Correctional Facilities - Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration

TO: Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr, and members of the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#/0115, **Election Law - Individuals Released From State Correctional Facilities - Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration**

The Brennan Center for Justice has noted that ¹

Millions of Americans are barred from voting because of criminal convictions in their past. Felony disenfranchisement laws — relics of Jim Crow — hit Black Americans disproportionately hard because of bias in the criminal justice system. The Brennan Center advances policies to re-enfranchise Americans who are living in the community, and we fight policies making it harder for Americans with past convictions to vote.

As reported by the ACLU ² in their press release *New Report: United States a Global Outlier in Denying Voting Rights Due to Criminal Convictions*

“Wide access to voting is a cornerstone of rights-respecting, democratic government, which is why the right to vote is protected in international human rights law and why the U.S. should reform its outlier status on voting rights,” said **Alison Leal Parker, deputy US director at Human Rights Watch**. “The right to vote, and the legitimacy of the democratic system in the United States should not depend on its criminal legal system, which is built upon and perpetuates discrimination.”

We will do this by requiring the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to transmit a list that includes the name and new residential address of individuals released from incarceration at a State correctional facility to the State Board of Elections on a weekly basis; requiring the State Board to automatically restore the voter registration of certain individuals released from State correctional facilities who were registered to vote in the State before being incarcerated; etc. Maryland can join twenty-six states and the District of Columbia in restoration of voting rights immediately after an incarcerated individual is released.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB#/0115.

¹ <https://www.brennancenter.org/topics/voting-elections/voting-rights-restoration>

² <https://www.aclu.org/press-releases/new-report-united-states-a-global-outlier-in-denying-voting-rights-due-to-criminal-convictions>