



Testimony - HB 115, Election Law - Individuals Released From State Correctional
Facilities - Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration
Favorable

House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

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Honorable Chairwoman Wells & Members of the House Government, Labor, and
Elections Committee:

SEIU Local 500, represents tens of thousands of public service and workers across Maryland who believe adherence to democratic principles and civic participation as the duty of all Americans, therefore, we respectfully submit the following favorable testimony in support of House Bill 115.

HB 115 is a commonsense and overdue step to ensure that Marylanders who are legally eligible to vote after release from incarceration are not disenfranchised by bureaucratic barriers. Under current practice, too many returning citizens leave state correctional facilities with their voting rights restored in theory, but not in practice. This bill closes that gap by creating a clear, automatic process to restore voter registration for individuals who were registered prior to incarceration and who reside in Maryland upon release.

SEIU Local 500 members believe that democracy works best when participation is accessible, inclusive, and fair. Workers understand firsthand how administrative hurdles can quietly deny people their rights. HB 115 recognizes that restoring the right to vote should not depend on navigating paperwork during an already difficult re-entry process. Automatic restoration ensures that eligible voters are treated with dignity and accuracy, not suspicion or delay.

Importantly, this legislation also protects individuals' privacy by prohibiting disclosure under the Public Information Act of the fact that a voter was registered through the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services. That safeguard matters. It prevents stigma, retaliation, or misuse of sensitive information, and affirms that once someone is eligible to vote, they should be treated no differently than any other voter in Maryland.

Our members include school employees, public servants, and higher education workers who see every day how civic engagement strengthens communities and workplaces alike. When returning citizens are fully reintegrated into civic life, families are more stable, communities are safer, and democracy is stronger. HB 115 aligns Maryland law with those values, enabling our state to be the example for representative democracy rather than what we are seeing in other states across the South such as Florida that continue to put hurdles in place for returning citizens, and thus stifling civic participation.

SEIU Local 500 urges this committee to advance HB 115 and continue Maryland's leadership in protecting voting rights and promoting an inclusive democracy. We would like to thank Delegate Wilkins for leading on this important issue.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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