

# *Responsive* GOV ACTION

February 2, 2026

## **Testimony on HB 115**

### **Election Law - Individuals Released from State Correctional Facilities - Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration Government, Labor, and Elections Committee**

**Position:** Favorable

We write in support of HB 115, which would ensure eligible voters who are being released from Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) facilities are automatically registered to vote. Responsive Gov Action is a nonpartisan organization dedicated to ensuring state and federal governments work effectively for the people they serve. Responsive Gov Action provides data, research, and expertise to elected officials to find practical policy solutions that make government systems more efficient, accessible, and responsive. HB 115 is a smart, practical policy designed to make voting more accessible to eligible voters leaving incarceration.

Thousands of Marylanders who have served their sentences and are eligible to vote are inhibited from exercising that right due to unnecessary bureaucratic barriers. At the same time, it is that clear civic engagement is a key factor in successful reentry. Indeed, studies have shown that individuals who vote and participate in their communities are less likely to reoffend.

The General Assembly passed legislation in 2021 requiring that DPSCS provide individuals leaving incarceration a paper voter registration. That legislation, while a step in the right direction, continues to put on the burden on the individual to register, even when the state already has all of the information they need to establish the individual's eligibility and place them on the voter rolls.

Moreover, while the State Board of Elections (SBE) is required to automatically strike voters from the rolls upon incarceration, that requirement does not work in the other direction—there is no process to ensure their registration is restored. This legislation would change that, requiring that SBE use existing secure processes to restore the voter registration of any eligible voter released from a DPSCS facility who was previously registered to vote in Maryland.

There is no reason for states to put in place administrative requirements that deter individuals from registering to vote when they already possess the information they need to confirm a voter's eligibility. This legislation recognizes that and puts in place a smart, efficient system that will ensure eligible voters can participate in democracy.

We urge a favorable report.