



**Maryland House of Delegates
Government, Labor, and Elections Committee
February 4, 2026
Submitted February 2, 2026
HB 115 (FAV)**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 115, regarding automatic restoration of voter registration for individuals released from state correctional facilities. Fair Elections Center is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to removing barriers to registration and voting through advocacy and impact litigation. The Center engages in legislation and litigation including seeking to reform state felony disenfranchisement laws across the country.

In 2016, Maryland law established that as soon as an individual with a felony conviction was released from incarceration, they automatically regained the right to vote. But barriers to voter registration persist for these returning citizens—just one of many tasks that they must handle as they rejoin their communities. HB 115 is an opportunity to streamline the registration process for many of these voters whose right to vote is already restored under current law by requiring state agencies to collaborate to provide automatic restoration of their pre-existing voter registration upon release from incarceration.

HB 115 would require the State Board of Elections to automatically restore the voter registration of any individual released from incarceration who was previously registered to vote in Maryland. To facilitate the identification of these voters, each week the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services must send the State Board a list of the names and new residential addresses for anyone who was released the preceding week from a state correctional facility. Then, the State Board would confirm who on that list was previously registered to vote in the state and automatically restore their registration.

Research has shown that restoration of the right to vote is positively correlated with a reduction in recidivism.¹ By taking the task of registering to vote off the plate of the individual voter, HB 115 eases the process for many re-enfranchised citizens, increases their connection to and voice in the communities they are rejoining, and minimizes additional barriers to exercising their voting rights.

HB 115 would simplify the registration process for many newly re-enfranchised citizens and emphasize the importance of their participation in democracy. Fair Elections Center urges swift passage of this bill. If you would like further information, please feel free to contact Emily Davis, Counsel at Fair Elections Center, at edavis@fairelectionscenter.org.

¹ Christopher Uggen & Jeff Manza, Voting and Subsequent Crime and Arrest: Evidence from a Community Sample, 36 Colum. Hum. Rts. L. Rev. 193, 213 (2004); *see also* Guy Padraic Hamilton-Smith & Matt Vogel, The Violence of Voicelessness: The Impact of Felony Disenfranchisement on Recidivism, 22 Berkeley La Raza L.J. 407, 427 (2012).