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Tiffen Lovler Tapia
1829 E. Lombard Street, Baltimore, MD 21231
tapia.tiffen@live.com / (352) 871-1500

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB372
Election Law - Correctional Facilities - Voter Registration and Voting

TO: Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

FROM: Tiffen Lovler Tapia

My name is Tiffen Lovler Tapia and I live in Baltimore City in District 46. This testimony is in support of SB372. Growing up in a Jewish household, one of the many things that I was taught was the lesson of *Tzelem Elohim*, that everyone was created in G-d's image. While I am not very religious, I take that lesson to mean that everyone was born with an inherent right to equal dignity and value. In the United States, every citizen is entitled to certain rights and dignity. One of the most important rights is the right to vote.

Currently, people convicted of non-felony offenses or those being held pre-trial have the legal right to vote, but often cannot exercise this right. This is unacceptable. Every individual has a right to vote and to choose the leaders who best align with their views and values. Limiting that right stands against what I have learned growing up, and betrays the values of the United States and of my Jewish culture. For individuals who have committed non-felony crimes, the ultimate goal of prison should not be to punish individuals, but rather to help them rehabilitate, to help them become better people. By restoring their right to vote, we show that Maryland and all of her citizens respect their dignity and value. I cannot think of a greater act of respect, than trusting someone in choosing the leaders of our state and country.

This is why I support SB372. This bill would help those who are incarcerated learn how to exercise their right to vote, and would supply them with voter registration forms, absentee ballots, and voter information. It would also provide enhanced training and educational materials to probation and parole officers about voting rights of returning citizens. You can provide that sense of dignity and respect by supporting SB372, the Expand the Vote Act.

I respectfully urge you to issue a favorable report on SB372.