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**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:** Andrew J. Miller

My name is Andrew Miller and I live in Baltimore in District 11. I submit this testimony in support of SB372 on behalf of the legal voting rights of Maryland citizens who have been incarcerated with or without having been convicted, because my Jewish faith tradition commands us to pursue justice.

A 2018 report by Job Opportunities Task Force, “The Criminalization of Poverty: How to break the cycle through policy reform in Maryland,” documents the many ways that “Maryland is penalizing people for being poor, creating de facto debtors’ prisons and trapping many in a vicious cycle where the smallest interaction with the criminal justice system becomes a life sentence.” It is clear that people of color and people living in poverty have disproportionate exposure to the criminal justice system, and that they are arrested at higher rates even for similar crimes. There are many people who are arrested and never charged or never convicted, yet still suffer consequences that can lead to loss of jobs and loss of housing. They have the right to vote. Others may be convicted of non-felony offenses and still retain the right to vote under the laws of our state.

These individuals are still citizens of our country and our state and they have the right to be treated with dignity even if they have been in the criminal justice system. They are entitled to vote as guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. It is the obligation of the State of Maryland to ensure that those rights are not abrogated. The cost of providing ballot or other materials cannot be used as an excuse for denying eligible voters access to the ballot. Constitutional rights are not to be treated as a matter of convenience to be allowed at the discretion of the correctional facility. All around the country we see laws being passed to limit access to the voting booth when we should be increasing access and making sure every person has the opportunity to exercise their rights.

This bill requires the board of elections to go into jails and prisons to supply voter registration forms, absentee ballots, and vote information; it provides enhanced training and educational materials to probation and parole officers about voting rights of returning citizens; it requires correctional facilities to cooperate fully with the State Board of Elections and the local board; and it includes reporting requirements to ensure accountability. **I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB372 that retains all of these requirements.**