



**TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE EDUCATION, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**SB 372 Election Law - Correctional Facilities - Voter Registration and Voting**

**POSITION: Support**

**BY: Lois Hybl and Richard Willson – Co-Presidents**

**Date: March 5, 2020**

The League of Women Voters believes that voting is a fundamental citizen right that must be guaranteed. For this reason, we supported legislation, which you passed, that enabled felons who are citizens and are no longer incarcerated, to once again participate in the election process.

We support SB 372, which would require correctional institutions to provide assistance with voter registration, applications for absentee ballots, and the proper return of those ballots for those eligible to vote. Prisoners generally do not have convenient access to the necessary forms and without that access they effectively lose the right to vote even if they legally retain that right. Accepting the responsibilities of registering and voting is an important step in reconnecting with the community and an orderly process for assisting imprisoned citizens to take that step will benefit both these citizens and the community. We note that the use of prepaid postage for absentee ballots would greatly simplify implementation of this bill, so we hope that the House will join the Senate in passing SB 33, which will make that improvement for all absentee ballots.

The League of Women Voters is proud of its role in registering citizens to vote, including the continuing program of the Montgomery County LWV working with the correctional facility there. The right to vote is too important, however, to depend solely on volunteer efforts that can reach only some of those needing assistance.

The LWVMD representing more than 1,500 concerned citizens throughout Maryland, strongly urges a favorable report on SB 372.