
Kimberly Haven

March 5, 2020

Chairman Pinsky
Vice Chair Kagan
Members of the Education, Health and Environmental Committee

SB 372 – Correctional Facilities- Voter Registration and Education
Position: SUPPORT

My name is Kimberly Haven and I am in support of SB 372.

As one of the leading criminal justice advocates in our State, I urge this committee to support this legislation.

The late Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall once declared, “the right to vote is preservative of all other civil and political rights.”

Voting is not a reward nor a privilege – it is a birthright and a hallmark of our democracy. The right to vote is a badge of citizenship and without this franchise all other rights are in jeopardy. Maryland expanded the right to vote in 2015 and yet failed to inform and educate all our citizens – particularly those who have criminal justice system involvement.

The State Board of Elections and Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services and other agencies have failed to engage thousands of eligible citizens since the legislation was enacted. This, while perhaps not intentional, is at its core voter suppression. They have discounted and dismissed the voices of these reenfranchised voters. They have denied and violated their right to participate in our democracy.

SB 372 would change that. This legislation ensures that there is a commitment to inform, educate and engage these eligible voters. By providing access to information, voter registration forms and absentee ballots, we strengthen our democracy and we encourage and support full civic participation.

A truly democratic government of the people incorporates all of our voices.

In closing, fairness dictates and democracy demands that we do everything we can to facilitate voting. To deny or shirk this responsibility only serves to undermine the very bedrock of our democracy.

I urge a favorable report on SB 372.

Respectfully,
Kimberly Haven