



## Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

*Shared Voices for Liberal Religious Values in Maryland*

### **SUPPORT HB0051 – Individuals Released From Correctional Facilities Voter Registration**

House Ways and Means Committee  
January 16, 2020

Good morning Chairman Kaiser, Vice- chair Del. Walker and Committee members,

I am Karen Clark speaking on behalf of the Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland (UULM-MD) We are a faith based organization that advocates on issues in Maryland which align with our principles. This issue connects with our first principle – we honor the inherent worth and dignity of all people.

In 2016 our state legislature reversed a law that prohibited those who were convicted of felony crimes from voting, so now once a person's full sentence is complete the returning citizen is able to begin to reenter on a positive note as a returning CITIZEN. However other parts of the reentry path are not as smooth; barriers, closed doors, and prejudices await. This bill removes some of the difficulties facing the returning citizen in the process of voter registration. Needed information and documents are provided, lessening the need for transportation to acquire them. It also sends a message that their vote/voice is important. So UULM-MD asks you to support this legislation to help ease this process and send a positive feeling during this difficult stage of reentry as the problems of acquiring housing, jobs, and other key aspects for a successful reentry are encountered.

About 48% of this population is unable to make a successful integration back into their communities. This bill is a step towards "doing the right thing." Our returning citizens need to have a voice in the government of their communities and country.

As Martin Luther King said: "Our lives begin to end the day we become SILENT about things that matter. " Let's help make the voices of four returning citizens heard.

The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry asks you to honor our first principle as well as our second principle by showing compassion, equity and justice in your actions.

Vote in favor of HB0051.

Thank you for your service.