

**Testimony in Support of HB0568,**

**Proposal to improve access to the ballot for eligible incarcerated and formerly incarcerated voters in Maryland.**

Good afternoon Chairperson Kaiser and members of the Committee. My name is Perry Hopkins and I am a 58 year old African American Ex Felon who voted for the first time in my life during 2016 election cycle, as a result of the new law.

While working with Communities United, I was very busy and vocal in the efforts to overturn our current governor's veto to restore voting rights to Marylanders with felony convictions. From the very moment of the passing of the new law, I have been eager and excited to exercise my right to vote. Even now I am involved in registering others like me to vote, and be represented.

As another election cycle is approaching, in both my travels and conversations with others like myself, I am consistently surprised and appalled to witness a travesty taking place, on a daily basis. At the passing of the new law, over 40,000 citizens became immediately empowered to vote. But only a very small sector of those most greatly affected have been properly informed. Many people are still operating on old information and not participating in the voting process.

The State of Maryland has accepted it's responsibility to change the law, but has accepted no responsibility to inform the citizenry of the change in the law, thereby empowering many to now participate in the election process.

It is for this reason that I am going to ask that this Bill be passed.