

GET MONEY OUT

Maryland

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STATEMENT TO THE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE SUPPORT FOR HOUSE BILL 568– ELECTION LAW – CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES - VOTER REGISTRATION AND VOTING

February 11, 2020

Get Money Out (GMOM) is an all-volunteer organization that was established just over seven years ago. We now have more than 8,400 citizen supporters. We work in Maryland toward the goals that all citizens should have equal access to the ballot and an equal say in governance.

Our democracy is in a crisis. Many do not participate in voting or in other aspects of civic engagement. Many others who do vote are losing faith in key elements of democratic participation. A 2018 survey by the Pew Foundation found 58% of US participants to be dissatisfied with how well democracy is working, 7% more than in 2017.ⁱ

Over our seven-year existence, GMOM has supported facilitating voting for all eligible voters. We actively supported House Bill 980 in the 2015 session, which became law and provided that people convicted of a felony are eligible to vote once they are returned to the community through probation or parole. House Bill 568 will make sure that those so released are informed of their right to vote.

Some of the persons whose voting would be facilitated by this bill are innocent of crime but detained for trial. Others are being detained for misdemeanors and may believe that incarceration itself is disqualifying. And, as a practical matter, the mechanics of voting while incarcerated have been difficult at best.

We strongly support the introduction of voter-registration personnel in these facilities. It should go a long way toward dispelling myths about who is and who isn't eligible to vote. We also believe that the very act of considering one's public responsibilities can be a factor that edges the person toward remaining or becoming law abiding. The "corrections" department should help the confined person move toward accepting his or her civic responsibility.

We urge a favorable report on HB 568 in order to continue Maryland's enviable record of making voting available and accessible to all eligible citizens.

ⁱ <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/05/31/the-countries-where-people-are-most-dissatisfied-with-how-democracy-is-working/>