



TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

HB 568 Election Law - Correctional Facilities - Voter Registration and Voting

POSITION: Support

BY: Lois Hybl and Richard Willson – Co-Presidents

Date: February 11, 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.

As we noted in our testimony in support of HB 51, which would assist citizens released from prison to register to vote, we also support this more comprehensive bill that 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 pass 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 ongoing work of the Montgomery County LWV within their county's correctional facility. 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 HB 568.