

EXPAND THE BALLOT

EXPAND THE VOTE

HB 568 | SB 372

Issue:

Many eligible incarcerated voters are not able to vote in jail because they do not have access to voter registration forms and absentee ballots applications. Additionally, there is no requirement that these voters are informed of their right to vote.

Background:

Maryland is one of the few states that has restored voting rights to individuals with a felony conviction. However, individuals who are incarcerated pending trial – known as pretrial defendants – and individuals convicted solely of a misdemeanor offense lack access to voter registration resources. There are currently over 9,000 people being held in pretrial detention in Maryland. Many of whom are from low income communities and are people of color.

Each election cycle, countless voters are excluded from participating in the electoral process as a result of their pretrial detention status, preventing them from accessing voter registration forms, absentee ballots, voting booths, and critical information on voting eligibility and deadlines.

Current Law/Policy:

Under current Maryland law, individuals detained in a correctional facility awaiting trial or incarcerated solely for a misdemeanor offense are eligible to vote. There is currently no requirement that the State Board of Elections provide them with voting materials.

HB 568/ SB 372 would mandate:

- That the State Board of Elections and the Department of Public Safety ensure access to voter registration, and absentee ballots for those who are on pretrial or who have been convicted of a misdemeanor.
- That each individual who is released from a correctional facility be provided with a voter registration application and documentation with papers informing them of their right to vote
- That voter informational signage is displayed in each parole and probation office, and that a notice is posted on the Department's website.
- The State Board of Elections conduct a yearly audit in order to track voter engagement for eligible incarcerated voters.



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