



**TESTIMONY TO THE EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**SB 224 Election Law – Correctional Facilities – Voter Registration and Voting**

**POSITION: Favorable**

**BY: Lois Hybl and Richard Willson – Co-Presidents**

**DATE: February 4, 2021**

The League of Women Voters of Maryland believes our election system should be representative, feasible to implement, and increase voter participation. We supported legislation that in 2016 restored voting rights to felons who have served their sentences and to non-felons who are currently incarcerated. However, further action is needed to guarantee that these citizens are fully enfranchised. The measures in SB 224 provide a means to this end.

Prisoners generally do not have convenient access to the necessary forms and instructions to register to vote or apply for a mail-in ballot; neither do they have an easy way to obtain detailed information about candidates or ballot questions. Because voter education is one of the League's foundational principles, for the 2020 General Election we spent considerable time and energy working to get our nonpartisan Voters' Guides delivered to eligible voters behind bars.

However, volunteer efforts to register and inform these citizens can only go so far. SB 224 requires correctional facilities to provide specific information, instructions, and assistance in a timely manner in cooperation with the State Board of Elections and local boards.

Voting makes people feel they have a stake in their community. Helping eligible incarcerated and recently released Marylanders exercise their voting rights will show that their community has a stake in them, too.

The League of Women Voters of Maryland supports the passage of SB 224.