

Dear Members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of white folks working as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City and Baltimore County. We are also working in collaboration with Out for Justice. I am a resident of MD District 46. My name is Lindsay Keipper, and I am an attorney who has been living and working in Baltimore for 15 years. I am testifying in **support of Senate Bill 224**, the Value My Vote Act.



Senate Bill 224 would require the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to provide each person released from a correctional facility with a voter registration application and documentation informing them that their voting rights have been restored. It also requires the State Board of Elections to adopt certain regulations establishing a program to inform eligible voters (who have not yet been convicted of a crime, or are in jail for misdemeanors) incarcerated in correctional facilities of upcoming elections and how to exercise the right to vote.

Maryland recognized in its 2007 restoration of voting rights that persons convicted of felonies should not be subject to a lifetime voting ban; in 2016 we took another important step forward by restoring the right to vote upon release from jail, rather the conclusion of parole and probation. However, restoring voting rights doesn't mean automatic voter registration, and people who have been in prison may not have access to or benefit from other agencies like the MVA that routinely register voters and inform them of their rights. In addition, a lot of confusion exists among persons in jail before and after conviction as to when they lose the right to vote and when it is restored.

Today, as we become even more acutely aware of the disproportionate impact of the criminal justice system on communities of color, it is incumbent on us to fulfil the promise of the 2007 and 2016 legislation by making sure people interacting with DPSCS not only have a right to vote, but are informed about that right and given the tools to exercise it. Merely giving a voter application to an inmate who knows to ask is not enough.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of Senate Bill 224**.

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Lindsay Keipper
2425 Fleet St.
Baltimore, MD 21224
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore