

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 42B. I am a Towson University grad, and seeing as my education was supported by the exploited labor of inmates in MD, the least I could do is testify **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 incarcerated in correctional facilities of upcoming elections and how to exercise the right to vote.

Maryland is one of 16 states that automatically restores the voting rights of people with felony convictions upon their release from incarceration. This means that even if someone is on parole or probation, or they have completed their sentence, they are eligible to vote in the state of Maryland. Many people who are incarcerated and awaiting pre-trial are also eligible to vote and those incarcerated on misdemeanor convictions can vote while incarcerated as well.

Automatically restoring voting rights does not mean automatic voter registration. Although most Marylanders benefit from automatic voter registration when they interact with government agencies like the MVA or the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange, there is still confusion among released felons about their rights.

It is important that those who are so affected by policy and legislation have a voice in our elections. Everyone who has the right to vote should be informed of that right and have an attainable path to secure that right.

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,
Christina Simmons
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Towson, MD 21204
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore