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PARLIAMENTARIAN

Ways and Means Committee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

January 19, 2021

House Bill 222 Value My Vote Act

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to present **House Bill 222 Value My Vote Act**, which would help increase voter participation by ensuring eligible incarcerated and formerly-incarcerated individuals are aware of their voting rights and have access to ballots and information. Specifically, this bill requires the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to provide each individual who is released from a correctional facility with a voter registration application and documentation that their voting rights have been restored, and requires the State Board of Elections to establish a program to inform eligible incarcerated voters of upcoming elections and how to exercise their right to vote.

Currently, individuals in the state who are detained in a correctional facility awaiting trial or are incarcerated for a misdemeanor offense are also eligible to vote in the state. In 2016, Maryland General Assembly expanded access to the ballot by voting to restore voting rights to an estimated 40,000 Marylanders by allowing individuals with felony convictions to vote while they are still under probation or parole.

However, there is no requirement that any of these eligible voters are made aware of their rights or receive voting materials from the State Board of Elections.

House Bill 222 creates a program to increase voting participation and awareness of voting rights for eligible incarcerated and formerly-incarcerated individuals. This bill specifies that voting rights should be posted online and in parole and probation offices, and requires eligible voters to receive voting registration materials, disseminated voting information, and instructions on how to register to vote. **I have also included amendments to specify the process for requesting, receiving, and collecting ballots; to create a State Board of Elections position to oversee statewide implementation of the program; and to clarify additional specifications to the voting program.**

It's critical that we continue to expand access to the ballot so all Marylanders can exercise their right to vote. I urge the committee to give a **favorable** report for **House Bill 222**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jheanelle Wilkins'.

Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins