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To: The Honorable Anne R. Kaiser
Chair, Ways and Means Committee

From: Hannibal G. Williams II Kemerer, Esq.
Office of the Attorney General

Re: HB0222 – Value My Vote Act – **Letter of Support**

The Office of the Attorney General urges both the Ways and Means Committee and the Judiciary Committee to favorably report the Value My Vote Act (HB 222). This legislation serves two main salutary purposes. First, it ensures that individuals who were incarcerated after a conviction receive notice of their eligibility to vote upon their release from confinement. Second, the legislation requires the State Board of Elections to ensure eligible pretrial detainees are informed of their right to vote and provided meaningful opportunities to request absentee ballots that they thereafter cast.

House Bill 222 creates a new subtitle in the Correctional Services Article to require the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) to: (1) provide released individuals with a voter registration application and documentation with the individual's discharge papers informing them of their restored voting rights; (2) display signage in each parole and probation office notifying individuals who are no longer incarcerated that they have the right to vote; and (3) post a notice in a conspicuous location on its website indicating that any individual no longer incarcerated has the right to vote.

The legislation further requires the State Board of Elections (SBE) to adopt regulations establishing a program to inform eligible voters about upcoming elections and how they may exercise their right to vote. The resulting regulations must, in turn, require the SBE and local boards to (1) disseminate information on voter eligibility requirements at least 30 days prior to the voter registration deadline before each election; (2) disseminate instructions on absentee voting; (3) provide frequent opportunities for eligible voters to register and vote; and (4) provide for the timely return of voter registration applications, absentee ballot applications, and absentee ballots cast by eligible voters. Furthermore, HB 222 requires each DPSCS correctional facility to cooperate fully with the SBE and local boards in implementing the program. Finally, the bill

requires the SBE to issue a report annually to the House and Senate oversight committees on or before January 15, that includes information on the number of eligible voters who registered to vote or voted successfully by absentee ballot during the proceeding calendar year. Such reports must be disaggregated by correctional facility.

The Attorney General is a strong proponent of expanding the electorate and ensuring that eligible voters are provided meaningful opportunities to engage civically through casting their ballots. For all of the foregoing reasons, we urge a favorable report on HB 222, the Value My Vote Act.

cc: Committee Members