



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony of Senator Jill P. Carter  
In Favor of SB30  
Before the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
On January 26, 2022**

**Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Esteemed Members of the Committee:**

**Senate Bill 30 is a bill we considered and passed out of committee and the Senate last year. Given its merits, I believe that should easily happen again this year. The bill, which is pretty straightforward, simply allows ex-offenders to serve on juries. The bill is based on the premise that once a formerly incarcerated individual has paid their debt to society, by serving out their sentence and being released from probation, that they are once again eligible to regain the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.**

**Last year, in 2021, House Bill 260, which was the crossfile of this bill, passed out of the House without amendment, and then came before this Committee. We greeted it with bi-partisan support and gave it a favorable report with amendment. The amendment addressed concerns around the possibility of individuals serving on juries who have pending charges. Senate Bill 30 addresses that concern. Under this bill, that will not happen; those with pending felonies or serious misdemeanors will not be eligible to serve on juries.**

**What this bill does is re-enfranchise Marylanders who have been disenfranchised by outdated laws adopted in the days of what some people tend to think of as a different and old America. In the late 1960s, in the shadow of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, Maryland, as well as a number of states throughout the South, passed a plethora of laws that snatched away the basic rights of citizenship from those who found themselves incarcerated, many of whom tended to be Black males. Among those rights taken were the right to vote and the right to serve on a jury. Given this legacy, one third of Black males in Maryland are ineligible to serve on a jury, diluting the jury pool of “peers” for African American defendants.**

**In 2016, the Maryland legislature led the way by being one of the first states in the country to re-enfranchise those who had completed their felony sentences and granted them the right to vote. As a consequence, Maryland achieved full voter enfranchisement that year. Senate Bill 30 takes the next step of restoring important liberties available to citizens - the right to sit on a jury and to have criminal charges tried in front of a jury of peers.**

**We can be proud of our leadership in emancipation, but we have more work to do. I ask that we step up to the plate and re-enfranchise those who currently cannot serve on a jury and restore this important right of citizenship. Doing so will place Maryland on track with 20 other states and the District of Columbia by allowing formerly incarcerated individuals to serve on juries.**

**I hope that members will once again find that this legislation plays an important role in reversing the disenfranchisement of our citizens from what we hope is a bygone era. This is worth our support.**

**Respectfully,**



**Jill P. Carter**