



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony of Senator Jill P. Carter**  
**In Favor of SB34 - Courts – Jury Service-Disqualification**  
**Before the Judicial Proceedings Committee**  
**on January 23, 2024**

**Mr. Chairman, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:**

**Senate Bill 34, alters the circumstances under which an individual is disqualified from jury service. The bill repeals a provision that disqualifies an individual who has previously received a sentence of imprisonment for more than one year. Instead, an individual is not qualified for jury service if the individual has been convicted of a crime punishable by imprisonment exceeding one year and is currently serving the sentence imposed for the conviction, including a term of parole or probation. The bill also disqualifies an individual for jury service if the individual was convicted of a crime involving or related to perjury, witness intimidation, jury intimidation, or a crime under Title 8 of the Criminal Law Article (Fraud and Related Crimes). Finally, the bill repeals a provision providing that an individual with a disqualifying conviction who has been pardoned qualifies for jury service.**

**I believe that this bill is a crucial step towards ensuring that our juries truly represent a diverse and unbiased cross-section of our community.**

**Under current Maryland law, an individual convicted of a felony, and some misdemeanors is precluded from serving on a jury. Maryland has one of the most restrictive jury exclusion laws in the country. Moreover, Maryland has**

**one of the highest incarceration rates for Black people in the country according to the Justice Policy Institute.**

**Senate Bill 34 proposes essential changes to the existing criteria for disqualification from jury service. The current disqualification criteria may inadvertently exclude individuals who are fully capable of serving on a jury while failing to adequately address potential biases. This bill seeks to rectify these issues by introducing more nuanced and fair disqualification standards that consider an individual's ability to be impartial rather than making blanket disqualifications based on certain characteristics.**

**Maryland Elections Law 3-102 permits an individual convicted of a felony to vote after completion of the sentence imposed. SB-34 will grant that same right when it comes to jury service. SB-34 will be the last step in restoring full citizenship to convicted individuals who have served their debt to society.**

**By advocating for a more inclusive approach to jury service, Senate Bill 34 will align Maryland with the 21 other states that permit convicted individuals to serve on juries after completion of their sentence. It acknowledges that individuals may bring valuable perspectives to the jury box and that disqualifications should be based on a demonstrated inability to be impartial rather than on arbitrary factors.**

**Furthermore, this bill has the potential to enhance public trust in our justice system. When juries are diverse and representative of the community, citizens are more likely to view the legal process as fair and just. Senate Bill 34 contributes to building a justice system that is not only effective but also perceived as equitable by the public.**

**In conclusion, I urge you to support Senate Bill 34 and work towards its passage. By doing so, we can take a significant step towards ensuring that our jury system is fair, inclusive, and reflective of the values we hold dear in our state.**

**Respectfully submitted,**



**Senator Jill P. Carter, Esq.**