



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

TESTIMONY

**SB 647: Election Law - Incarcerated Individuals - Voter Hotline and Voting Eligibility  
(Voting Rights for All Act)**

Good afternoon, Chairman Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee.

Senate Bill 647, the *Voting Rights for All Act*, restores the right to vote for Maryland residents currently incarcerated for a felony by repealing the provision in State law that disqualifies individuals from voter registration while serving a court-ordered sentence of imprisonment. This bill also requires the State Board of Elections to establish a toll-free voter hotline for incarcerated individuals, ensuring they have access to essential election information. The cost of implementing this hotline is minimal, but the impact is immeasurable.

Currently, individuals in Maryland correctional facilities awaiting trial or serving sentences for misdemeanors retain their right to vote. In 2021, we took an important step toward ensuring access to the ballot for these individuals. My panelists, who supported that initiative, can explain how that process works and how we can build upon it by extending voting rights to those serving felony sentences.

I firmly believe that all Marylanders, regardless of criminal conviction, should maintain the unalienable right to vote. Voting should not be a privilege determined by who we deem good or bad; it is a fundamental right that should belong to all citizens of voting age. Our democracy is strongest when every voice is heard, including those who remain part of our communities despite incarceration. This bill recognizes that all Marylanders deserve a say in the policies and decisions that shape their lives.

Maryland has an opportunity to join states like Maine and Vermont in affirming that justice-involved individuals should not be stripped of their civic participation. Disenfranchisement disproportionately impacts communities of color and undermines rehabilitation and reintegration efforts. By ensuring access to the ballot, we reinforce the principles of democracy, accountability, and inclusion.

For these reasons, I strongly urge a favorable report on SB 647.