



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB435

Courts - Jury Service - Disqualification

TO: Chair and Members of the Chair and Members of the [Judiciary](#) Committee

Out for Justice supports HB 435

Today, roughly 19 million Americans, 8 percent of the U.S. population, live with a felony conviction record. In 49 states, the District of Columbia and the federal court system, felons are legally restricted from serving as jurors. In 28 states and in the federal court system, those restrictions are permanent, barring convicted felons from jury service for life. In most remaining states, convicted felons may not serve as jurors until the completion of their sentence, which includes probation and parole. Moreover, in all but four states, felon-juror exclusion laws prevent all convicted felons from serving on any type of jury – grand, civil or criminal. Such laws have been part of American law since the Founding. All Marylanders who have completed their criminal sentence may vote in elections. Under this legislation, those same individuals will have their rights to serve on juries restored also.

The American criminal justice system disproportionately impacts Black and Latinx people with data indicating one in three Black men have a felony conviction. This data results in many people of color being unable to have a jury of their peers and presents equity consequences.

We respectfully urge a **favorable** report on HB 435.