

Written Testimony for **HB 710**: Election Law - Incarcerated Individuals - Voter Hotline and Voting Eligibility (Voting Rights for All Act) - Please **VOTE NO** on this bill.

Dear Ways & Means Committee:

That bill reads: "...Requiring the State Board of Elections to provide a certain voter hotline for incarcerated individuals; and altering the circumstances under which an individual is not qualified to be a registered voter **for the purpose of allowing individuals convicted of a felony and serving a court-ordered sentence of imprisonment for the conviction to register to vote...**"

"...(A) THE STATE BOARD SHALL PROVIDE A TOLL-FREE VOTER HOTLINE FOR INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS TO RECEIVE INFORMATION ABOUT VOTING, REQUEST ELECTION-RELATED MATERIALS, AND REPORT VOTING RIGHTS VIOLATIONS.

(B) THE STATE BOARD SHALL ADOPT REGULATIONS IN COLLABORATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES AND CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE VOTER HOTLINE..."

The only two stipulations that disqualify a person from registering to vote are "if the individual: (1) is under guardianship for mental disability and a court of competent jurisdiction has specifically found by clear and convincing evidence that the individual cannot communicate, with or without accommodations, a desire to participate in the voting process; or (2) has been convicted of buying or selling votes..."

The problems I have with this bill are as follows: 1. The person is incarcerated because they have been convicted of a crime. Why are we allowing convicted criminals to register to vote or receive any information whatsoever about elections, voter registration and voting? We should not!! If they are serving time in jail, they should not be entitled to receive this information. They are incarcerated so that they can serve their time for whatever crime they committed. They are incarcerated so that they can pay their debt to society. Maybe prisoners could spend some of their free time learning new job skills so that they can be employable when they are released and not be tempted to return to the criminal behavior that they committed that caused them to be in prison in the first place.

2. The term “mental disability” is not defined. Are we going to allow severely mentally disabled people to register to vote and to vote? Mental disability could mean a spectrum of things. Are we going to allow people that hallucinate and are disconnected from reality to register to vote and to vote? If they are “...under guardianship for mental disability...”, that indicates that their mental disability is severe enough that someone has to watch over them, presumably to keep them safe. But, under this new law, as long as the mentally disabled person has a “...desire to participate in the voting process...”, they should be allowed to participate. This could be a direct danger to the rest of the voting public and should not be allowed!

3. The other stipulation that disqualifies a person from registering to vote is that a person “...has been convicted of buying or selling votes...” This is a good and necessary disqualification from registering to vote and voting. However, what if an incarcerated person was convicted of a heinous crime, like murder? Maybe murder with dismemberment? What if the crime was a violent crime against a child? Are we now going to let violent criminals register to vote and to vote? No convict serving time in prison should be allowed to register to vote or to vote!! Just because that incarcerated person didn't buy or sell votes does **not** mean that whatever crime that they are serving time for should qualify them to register to vote or to vote.

This bill does not make any sense; no logical sense and no common sense. And it should not be passed.

Please **VOTE NO** on this bill.

Thank you for your courtesy, attention and cooperation.

Respectfully,

Trudy Tibbals
A Very Concerned Mother of 3 and Maryland Resident