

Thursday, February 20, 2025



Showing Up for Racial Justice

Dear **Members of the Ways and Means Committee,**

I am submitting this testimony as a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) Baltimore, a group of individuals working to mobilize white people in a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with Out for Justice, which advocates for the reform of policies and practices that adversely affect incarcerated people's successful reintegration into society. I am a resident of Baltimore City and District 41. I am testifying in **support of HB1110 - Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration.**

Because persons serving jail sentences for felony convictions are prohibited from voting, the current law requires that the courts provide lists of convicted persons to the Board of Elections, who must then strike those individuals from the voter rolls. While the process of un-registering these voters is thereby made automatic, there is no comparable automatic process for re-registering people who are being released from prison and becoming eligible to vote again. Instead, released people must take affirmative steps to re-register, a requirement that can get lost in the overwhelming tasks required of a person re-entering society after incarceration.

While finding a job, a place to live, and a new sense of stability may be the returning citizen's first priorities, re-establishing their ability to vote should be one of the first priorities of the society they are returning to. The more people who vote, the stronger our democracy is.

HB1110 would simply establish a process that reverses the process by which convicted persons are removed from the voter rolls. The bill requires that the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services provide regular lists of released persons to the Board of Elections, and that the Board of Elections then re-register persons on the list who were previously registered before their incarceration. This would make the process of adding

returning citizens back to the voter rolls as automatic as the process of taking incarcerated citizens off the rolls. This is more equitable than the current system and demonstrates an appropriate prioritization of citizens' right to vote.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of HB1110 - Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Dr. Katherine Blaha
5706 Cross Country Blvd
Baltimore, MD 21209
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) Baltimore