



Testimony in Support of HB1110

Election Law – Individuals Released From State Correctional Facilities – Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration

Committee Name: Ways and Means

Hearing Date: 02/24/2025

Submitted by: Neka Duckett-Randolph, Membership, Advocacy, and Strategic Partnership Coordinator Out For Justice

To Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and Honorable Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Neka Duckett-Randolph, and I am here on behalf of Out For Justice to urge the passage of this critical bill, which will strengthen democracy and public safety by promoting successful reentry, and ensure that all Marylanders have a voice in the electoral process.

The right to vote is fundamental to our democracy, yet thousands of Marylanders who have served their sentences remain disenfranchised due to unnecessary bureaucratic barriers. HB1110 ensures that individuals reentering society are immediately reintegrated into the democratic process. Voting is not just a right; it is a critical means of civic participation that fosters a sense of belonging and responsibility. By passing HB1110, Maryland will reaffirm its commitment to a fair and inclusive democracy where every voice matters. The impact of felony disenfranchisement disproportionately affects Black and Brown communities due to systemic racial disparities in the criminal legal system. Nationally, African Americans are more likely to be convicted and incarcerated, leading to a higher rate of disenfranchisement. HB1110 directly addresses this injustice by ensuring that individuals are not further punished after serving their time. Automatically restoring voting rights is a step toward racial equity and justice.

Civic engagement is a key factor in successful reentry. Studies have shown that individuals who vote and participate in their communities are less likely to reoffend. When people leaving incarceration feel included in society, they are more likely to engage in pro-social behaviors and reintegrate successfully. By restoring voting rights upon release, HB1110 fosters civic responsibility and reduces the likelihood of recidivism, ultimately benefiting public safety and community well-being. In 2014, the Maryland General Assembly overwhelmingly passed SB 340/HB 980, which would have restored the right to vote to all citizens upon release from prison. That progress was erased when Governor Larry Hogan vetoed the measure. Today, we are asking that the General Assembly continue down the path of progress and take this opportunity to move Maryland forward and protect democracy. It has never been more necessary that Maryland be a beacon to the rest of the



country, with our democracy directly under attack at the highest level of government just down the road.

For all these reasons, I strongly urge the committee to support HB1110. This legislation is not only a matter of justice but a necessary step to ensure that all Marylanders, regardless of their past, have a stake in shaping their communities and their futures. Thank you for your time and consideration. I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB1110.

Sincerely,
Neka Duckett-Randolph
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