



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations
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HB0710

February 11, 2025

TO: Members of the House Ways & Means Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: House Bill 710 - Election Law - Incarcerated Individuals - Voter Hotline and Voting Eligibility (Voting Rights for All Act)

POSITION: Support

Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 710.

HB 710 would remove provisions from Article – Election Law of the Annotated Code of Maryland that disqualify Marylanders convicted of a felony and serving a term of imprisonment from voting. In addition, this bill would no longer require the names and addresses of all individuals convicted of a felony and sentenced to imprisonment with commitment papers to the State Administrator for the purpose of rendering them ineligible to vote. HB 710 repeals a provision of existing law that defines individuals who vote while serving a felony term of imprisonment as guilt of a felony. Finally, HB710 would require the State Board of Elections to provide a toll-free voter hotline for incarcerated individuals to receive information on voting, request voting materials, and report voting rights violations.

HB 710 bolsters voting rights and protections within the state of Maryland for one of the most democratically marginalized demographics in the state and nation - incarcerated individuals, particularly those convicted of a felony. This bill is transformative and would affirmatively address the inequitable disenfranchisement of Black Marylanders.

As of fiscal year 2023, the percentage of Maryland's incarcerated population who were Black was 72.4%, the highest of any state and over double that of the national average. This is despite Black Marylanders representing less than one-third the total state population. Under current law which disqualifies these incarcerated individuals convicted of a felony from voting, the revocation of voting rights disproportionately disenfranchises Black Marylanders.

The City of Baltimore City is committed to improving the equity of all of our residents, and , The Baltimore City Administration respectfully requests a **favorable** committee report on House Bill 710.