



Empowering People to Lead Systemic Change

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SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
Senate Bill 89: Election Law - Incarcerated Individuals - Voter
Hotline and Voting Eligibility (Voting Rights for All Act)
FEBRUARY 11, 2026
POSITION: SUPPORT

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM) is the federally-mandated Protection and Advocacy agency of Maryland, charged with defending and advancing the rights of people with disabilities. DRM submits this testimony in support of SB 89, which expands voting access by establishing a nonpartisan voter hotline for incarcerated individuals and restoring the right to vote for people currently serving felony sentences.

SB 89 restores voting rights to individuals currently incarcerated for felony convictions in Maryland. Approximately 16,000 people in the state are currently disenfranchised due to serving criminal sentences.¹This disenfranchisement disproportionately affects marginalized communities, including people with disabilities. Nationally, about 38% of incarcerated individuals have at least one disability.²Restoring voting rights is essential to ensuring that people with disabilities can fully participate in Maryland's electoral process.

In addition to restoring voting rights, SB 89 requires the State Board of Elections to establish a tollfree voter hotline for incarcerated individuals. This hotline will provide critical information about voter registration, requesting ballots, and reporting potential voting rights violations. For people with disabilities who are incarcerated, accessing information can often present barriers. Ensuring that the hotline and related election materials are accessible is essential to guarantee that all incarcerated voters, regardless of disability, can access information and exercise their right to vote independently. DRM recommends that accessibility standards for the created hotline be implemented. A staffed hotline, accessible via video relay for Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals, would enhance usability for all voters who regain their right to vote under this legislation.

Without this legislation, individuals incarcerated for felony convictions—many of whom have disabilities—will continue to experience the temporary loss of

¹ <https://www.sentencingproject.org/fact-sheet/why-we-must-restore-voting-rights-to-over16000marylanders/>

² <https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/disabilities-reported-prisoners-survey-prisoninmates-2016>

a fundamental right, followed by uncertainty about their ability to vote upon release. While Maryland automatically restores voting rights after incarceration, lack of awareness, administrative hurdles, and reintegration challenges disproportionately impact those with disabilities. The most effective approach is to ensure that individuals do not lose their voting rights during the conviction and sentencing process. Establishing an accessible hotline will provide critical support, giving eligible voters, including those impacted by incarceration, the resources they needed to begin participating in civic life again.

For these reasons, DRM requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 89.

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