



OUT FOR JUSTICE

TESTIMONY IN **SUPPORT** OF SENATE BILL 89/ HOUSE BILL 52

Election Law - Incarcerated Individuals - Voter Hotline and Voting Eligibility (Voting Rights for All Act) SB89/HB52

TO: Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Committee
FROM: **Marsha Briley-Savage**, Reentry Coordinator, Anne Arundel Government

Date: February 11, 2026

Position: SUPPORT

My name is **Marsha Briley-Savage**, and I am submitting this testimony in strong support of **HB0052/SB0089, the Voting Rights for All Act**. This legislation would expand voting eligibility to incarcerated Marylanders serving felony sentences and create a toll-free voter hotline to ensure meaningful access to voting information and materials for people behind bars.

Background and Professional Experience

My work advancing civic engagement for justice-impacted Marylanders began in 2016, when the Maryland General Assembly overrode the veto of SB 340/HB 980 to restore voting rights to more than 40,000 Marylanders. I ensured State Board of Elections training for all DPSCS Transition Specialists and required the Board's presence at Reentry Fairs so people nearing release could prepare to rejoin their communities as fully participating citizens.

As Reentry Coordinator for Anne Arundel County detention facilities, I have seen persistent barriers to voting access for justice-impacted individuals. Facilities prohibit internet access and mobile devices, making modern voter registration and information access nearly impossible without institutional support. Case managers often lack the training or bandwidth to consistently assist people in registering or accessing ballots.

HB0052/SB0089 would:

- **Restore voting eligibility for individuals convicted of felonies who are currently serving their sentences** by removing the incarceration disqualification from the voter qualification criteria.
- **Create a toll-free voter hotline** operated by the State Board of Elections for incarcerated individuals to receive reliable voting information, request election materials, and report voting rights violations.



These provisions address access barriers at the source and set up consistent, statewide processes rather than relying on individual facilities or staff.

National Context and Outcomes

Nationally, felony disenfranchisement laws vary widely. Only a handful of jurisdictions—**Maine, Vermont, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico**—allow all eligible citizens to vote regardless of incarceration status.

Research from The Sentencing Project highlights that states like Maine and Vermont retain voting rights for incarcerated individuals, and that maintaining civic ties during incarceration can help people build community identity and pro-social connections. Although turnout among incarcerated voters historically has been low, these findings show that **removing legal barriers and improving access has democratic value** and helps sustain connections to community life.

Expanding access to the ballot also aligns with broader democratic trends, such as state efforts to restore voting rights and remove burdensome disenfranchisement practices, recognizing that civic participation supports reintegration and community belonging.

Why This Matters in Maryland

Maryland currently restores voting rights upon release from incarceration, but there is no uniform mechanism to ensure that people are registered or informed once their rights return. HB 52 / SB 89 fills this gap by providing *both* eligibility reform and a practical tool (the hotline) to support compliance and access. This is consistent with Maryland's commitment to civic inclusion and reentry support.

Voting is one of the most fundamental forms of civic participation in a representative democracy. HB 52 / SB 89 ensures that eligible Marylanders behind bars are not wholly excluded from the process that shapes the laws and leaders governing their lives.

I respectfully urge a **favorable report on HB 52 / SB 89**.

Thank you for your consideration.

Marsha Briley-Savage