



## Testimony for the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

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### SB 241- Election Law – Automatic Voter Registration – State Correctional Facilities

#### FAVORABLE

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The ACLU of Maryland urges a favorable report on SB 241, a bill that would designate the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) as an automatic voter registration agency and would require the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to register eligible individuals to vote upon release from confinement from a state correctional facility.

SB 241 furthers the goal of enfranchisement for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated persons, a goal this legislature supported by passing the Value My Vote Act in 2021, ensuring that incarcerated individuals who were not convicted of felonies or were awaiting trial would be aware of their right to vote. Designating DPSCS as an automatic voter registration agency and requiring the department to register qualified individuals upon release will increase participation among a formerly disenfranchised population of voters.

#### Increased Voting Participation

Data shows that having an automatic voting registration system in place will increase the percentage of new voting registrations. SB 241 would mandate that DPSCS establish a system by January 1, 2025. A study from the Brennan Center for Justice states:

“Maryland observed a spike in its registration rate at MVA offices after implementing electronic registration. Between November 2008 and November 2010, the two years preceding the introduction of electronic registration, Motor Vehicle Administration offices produced 61.2% of all new voter

registrations. That figure rose to 80% between November 2012 and November 2014, the first time the state had electronic registration during the run-up to a midterm election.”<sup>1</sup>

If Maryland is serious about empowering formerly incarcerated persons to vote, measures like SB 241 are necessary to break down existing logistical and administrative barriers to enfranchisement.

For the foregoing reasons, the ACLU of Maryland urges a favorable report on SB 241.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/vrm-states-maryland>