

DRM Written Testimony FAV SB 241 Auto Registration

Uploaded by: Braden Stinar

Position: FAV



Empowering People to Lead Systemic Change

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DisabilityRightsMD.org

SENATE GOVERNMENT, LABOR, ELECTIONS COMMITTEE
SB 241 – Election Law – Individuals Released from State
Correctional Facilities – Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration
February 11, 2026
Position: SUPPORT

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM) is the Protection & Advocacy agency in Maryland, federally mandated to advance the civil rights of people with disabilities. DRM works to increase opportunities for Marylanders with disabilities to be part of their communities through voting. DRM supports SB 241, which requires the State Board of Elections (SBE) to automatically restore the voter registration of individuals released from incarceration who were registered to vote in Maryland prior to their incarceration.

SB 241 creates a requirement for the Department of Public Safety to provide the SBE on a weekly basis with the names and addresses of individuals released from incarceration. SBE is then responsible for automatically restoring each individual's voter registration at their new address and notifying them by mail of their active voter status.

DRM strongly supports this bill and recognizes its significance for formerly incarcerated Marylanders with disabilities, who often face barriers when reintegrating into their communities. Protecting their fundamental voting rights by removing obstacles in the voting registration process is essential to ensuring full civic participation.

In Maryland, approximately 16,000 people are unable to vote due to currently serving criminal convictions.¹ This disenfranchisement disproportionately affects underrepresented groups, including people with

disabilities. Nationally, approximately 38% of incarcerated individuals have at least one disability, highlighting the significant impact of voter disenfranchisement on this population.² SB 241 marks a significant step

¹ <https://www.sentencingproject.org/fact-sheet/why-we-must-restore-voting-rights-to-over-16000marylanders/>

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

DRM Testimony: Senate Bill 241

February 11, 2026

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forward by requiring the Department of Public Safety and State Board of Elections to collaborate in restoring voting rights for individuals upon release, significantly reducing uncertainty for those incarcerated for felony convictions—many of whom have disabilities—about the registration and restoration process.

For these reasons, DRM requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 241.

Contact: Braden Stinar, Bradens@disabilityrightsmd.org or 443-692-2485

SB 241 — Election Law — Automatic Restoration of V

Uploaded by: Carlos Orbe, Jr.

Position: FAV

February 9, 2026

The Honorable **Senator Brian J. Feldman**

Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

2 West Miller Senate Office Building

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support for SB 241 — Election Law — Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration Upon Release

Dear Chair Feldman and Vice Chair Cheryl C. Kagan,

Maryland Latinos Unidos (MLU) strongly supports **Senate Bill 241**, *Election Law — Individuals Released From State Correctional Facilities — Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration*, scheduled for hearing in the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee. This bill requires the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to transmit weekly release lists to the State Board of Elections and mandates automatic restoration of voter registration for individuals previously registered before incarceration.

Restoring voter registration automatically upon release removes bureaucratic barriers that prevent eligible individuals from participating in civic life. Latino voters are disproportionately justice impacted and face complex procedures to reengage in voting after incarceration. When registration is restored automatically, families, communities, and civic institutions benefit from fuller inclusion in democratic processes.

Implications for Latino and Immigrant Marylanders

Automatic restoration enhances community stability and representation. When eligible individuals are reconnected to voting without delay or confusion, it strengthens voice in decisions that shape housing, education, employment, and public safety. This policy combats disenfranchisement rooted in administrative obstruction and aligns Maryland with best practices for inclusive democracy.

MLU will work with reentry providers and community voters to share clear multilingual information and support outreach efforts tied to implementation.

MLU urges the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 241.

Sincerely,
Carlos Orbe, Jr.

Communications and Public Affairs Specialist

Maryland Latinos Unidos

corbejr@mdlatinosunidos.org

SEIU Local 500 Testimony in Support of SB 241 2026

Uploaded by: Christopher Cano

Position: FAV



Testimony - SB 241, Election Law - Individuals Released From State Correctional
Facilities - Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration
Favorable

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

February 11, 2026

Christopher C. Cano, MPA

Director of Political & Legislative Affairs on Behalf of SEIU Local 500

Honorable Chairman Feldman & Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the
Environment Committee:

SEIU Local 500, represents tens of thousands of public service and workers across Maryland who believe adherence to democratic principles and civic participation as the duty of all Americans, therefore, we respectfully submit the following favorable testimony in support of Senate Bill 241.

SB 241 is a commonsense and overdue step to ensure that Marylanders who are legally eligible to vote after release from incarceration are not disenfranchised by bureaucratic barriers. Under current practice, too many returning citizens leave state correctional facilities with their voting rights restored in theory, but not in practice. This bill closes that gap by creating a clear, automatic process to restore voter registration for individuals who were registered prior to incarceration and who reside in Maryland upon release.

SEIU Local 500 members believe that democracy works best when participation is accessible, inclusive, and fair. Workers understand firsthand how administrative hurdles can quietly deny people their rights. SB 241 recognizes that restoring the right to vote should not depend on navigating paperwork during an already difficult re-entry process. Automatic restoration ensures that eligible voters are treated with dignity and accuracy, not suspicion or delay.

Importantly, this legislation also protects individuals' privacy by prohibiting disclosure under the Public Information Act of the fact that a voter was registered through the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services. That safeguard matters. It prevents stigma, retaliation, or misuse of sensitive information, and affirms that once someone is eligible to vote, they should be treated no differently than any other voter in Maryland.

Our members include school employees, public servants, and higher education workers who see every day how civic engagement strengthens communities and workplaces alike. When returning citizens are fully reintegrated into civic life, families are more stable, communities are safer, and democracy is stronger. SB 241 aligns Maryland law with those values, enabling our state to be the example for representative democracy rather than what we are seeing in other states across the South such as Florida that continue to put hurdles in place for returning citizens, and thus stifling civic participation.

SEIU Local 500 urges this committee to advance SB 241 and continue Maryland's leadership in protecting voting rights and promoting an inclusive democracy. We would like to thank Senator Augustine for leading on this important issue.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Christopher C. Cano, MPA
Director of Political & Legislative Affairs
SEIU Local 500

Favorable Testimony SB241 021126 Miller.pdf

Uploaded by: Cynthia Miller

Position: FAV

February 11, 2026

**Testimony on SB 241
Election Law - Individuals Released from State Correctional Facilities -
Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

Position: Favorable

As a lifelong resident of Maryland, a democracy activist and co-lead of Third Act Maryland, I urge a favorable report on SB241, which would ensure eligible voters who are being released from Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) facilities have access to voter registration. 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.

Third Act Maryland, an organization of over 1,000 elders committing to safeguarding our democracy, believes access to voter registration/ability to meaningfully engage in our democracy is critical. Every eligible Marylander deserves a voice, and a vote, in our democracy. This includes individuals who have been released from incarceration who have automatically regained the right to vote.

Marylanders serving a sentence for felony convictions are prohibited from voting. The Court regularly sends a list of individuals who were once eligible to vote but now prohibited from voting to the State Board of Elections (SBE). They are then automatically removed from the voter rolls. In 2016, Maryland law established that, upon release from incarceration, an individual with a felony conviction automatically regained the right to vote. But barriers to voting access for returning citizens persist. While SBE is required to automatically strike them from the voter rolls, there is no process to ensure their registration is restored and that they are notified of their rights. While the General Assembly passed legislation in 2021 requiring that DPSCS include a paper voter registration form in the packet of materials these individuals receive upon release, the legislation did not go far enough.

SB 241 goes a step further. It would require that SBE use existing secure processes to restore the voter registration of any eligible voter released from a DPSCS facility who was previously registered to vote in Maryland. To facilitate the identification of these voters, each week the DPSCS would send the SBE a list of the names and new residential addresses of anyone released the preceding week from a state correctional facility. Then, SBE confirms eligibility and restores the registration or processes the new registration.

It is imperative for the preservation of our democratic processes and personal liberties here in Maryland, that this bill receive a favorable report.

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.

Voting is the most essential form of political expression and the right to do so is fundamental to an open democracy. SB 241 ensures returning citizens know their rights have been restored and increase their access to and participation in our elections.

We urge a favorable report.

Cynthia Miller, Co-facilitator, Third Act Maryland (D27-C)

SB241 - Automatic voter registration restoration.p

Uploaded by: Daryl Yoder

Position: FAV

Dear **Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,**

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with Out for Justice. I am a resident of District 44A. **I am testifying in support of SB241 - Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration.**



Showing Up for Racial Justice

Currently, because persons serving jail sentences for felony convictions are prohibited from voting, the law requires that the courts provide lists of persons so convicted to the Board of Elections, who must then strike those individuals from the voter rolls. While the process of un-registering these voters is thereby made automatic, there is no process to accomplish the re-registration of people who are being released from prison and becoming eligible to vote again. They must take affirmative steps to re-register, a requirement which may get lost in the large number of tasks required of a person re-entering society after incarceration. While a job and a place to live may have to be the returning citizen's first priorities, re-establishing their ability to have a vote should be one of the first priorities of the society they are returning to. The more people who vote, the proportionately stronger our democracy is.

SB241 would simply establish a process that reverses that by which convicted persons were removed from the voter rolls. The bill requires that the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services provide regular lists of released persons to the Board of Elections, and that the BoE then re-register those persons on the list who were previously registered before their incarceration. This would make the process of adding returning citizens back to the voter rolls as automatic as the process of taking incarcerated citizens off the rolls. This is more equitable than the current system, under which returning citizens must take care of re-registration themselves.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of SB241 - Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Daryl Yoder
309 Glenmore Ave.
Catonsville, MD 21228
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

SB 241 FAV - David Weinberg, Protect Democracy Uni

Uploaded by: David Weinberg

Position: FAV

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

**Testimony on: SB 241 General Assembly –
(Election Law - Individuals Released From State Correctional
Facilities - Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration)**

Position: FAVORABLE

Hearing Date: February 11, 2026

Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr, and distinguished Members of this Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony to you today.

My name is Dr. David Weinberg, and I am writing to you in my capacity as a Policy Strategist for Protect Democracy United, a cross-partisan 501(c)(4) that seeks to strengthen the representative institutions of our system of government. I am also a proud Maryland resident.

Protect Democracy United encourages you to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 241.

This bill would help ensure that individuals being released from Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) facilities face less obstacles to having their voting rights restored.

If we want to build a better society, then we need a better democracy. And at its most fundamental, a well-functioning democracy depends upon everybody's interests being adequately represented.

Whenever a Maryland voter is convicted of a felony, their voter registration is automatically cancelled. But there is no parallel process on the back end to automatically restore their right to vote upon being released from prison.

Since 2018, Maryland has taken impactful steps toward instituting automatic voter registration at a variety of other agencies, including the Motor Vehicle Administration, local social service agencies, and the Maryland healthcare exchange. It's time for us to expand such practices to reach this population of Marylanders whose voices are often marginalized from policy debates.

Lastly, the mechanism that SB 241 uses to institute automatic voter registration for this population is unlikely to create any major new administrative burdens.

DPSCS would be directed to regularly send the State Board of Elections a list of names and addresses for individuals released the previous week from a state correctional facility. Thus, our election officials would be able to evaluate each such person's eligibility for return to the voter rolls after such updates routinely come in, instead of all at once.

At the end of the day, living up to our ideals means enabling every one of our fellow citizens to participate in civic life who is eligible and interested. And that means establishing voter registration - and re-registration - practices that meet people where they are, when they're able, and reduces potential obstacles to their full participation, including once they've finished their sentences and return to life outside of the criminal justice system.

For these reasons, we hope you will issue a favorable report on SB 241. Thank you for your consideration.

For more information, contact:

David A. Weinberg

Policy Strategist

david.weinberg@protectdemocracy.org

ABOUT US

Protect Democracy United is a nonpartisan, nonprofit group working to prevent American democracy from declining into a more authoritarian form of government.

Fair Elections Ctr Testimony FAV SB 241 2026-02-09

Uploaded by: Emily Davis

Position: FAV



**Maryland Senate
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
February 11, 2026
Submitted February 9, 2026
SB 241 (FAV)**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 241, regarding automatic restoration of voter registration for individuals released from state correctional facilities. Fair Elections Center is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to removing barriers to registration and voting through advocacy and impact litigation. The Center engages in legislation and litigation including seeking to reform state felony disenfranchisement laws across the country.

In 2016, Maryland law established that as soon as an individual with a felony conviction was released from incarceration, they automatically regained the right to vote. But barriers to voter registration persist for these returning citizens—just one of many tasks that they must handle as they rejoin their communities. SB 241 is an opportunity to streamline the registration process for many of these voters whose right to vote is already restored under current law by requiring state agencies to collaborate to provide automatic restoration of their pre-existing voter registration upon release from incarceration.

SB 241 would require the State Board of Elections to automatically restore the voter registration of any individual released from incarceration who was previously registered to vote in Maryland. To facilitate the identification of these voters, each week the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services must send the State Board a list of the names and new residential addresses for anyone who was released the preceding week from a state correctional facility. Then, the State Board would confirm who on that list was previously registered to vote in the state and automatically restore their registration.

Research has shown that restoration of the right to vote is positively correlated with a reduction in recidivism.¹ By taking the task of registering to vote off the plate of the individual voter, SB 241 eases the process for many re-enfranchised citizens, increases their connection to and voice in the communities they are rejoining, and minimizes additional barriers to exercising their voting rights.

SB 241 would simplify the registration process for many newly re-enfranchised citizens and emphasize the importance of their participation in democracy. Fair Elections Center urges swift passage of this bill. If you would like further information, please feel free to contact Emily Davis, Counsel at Fair Elections Center, at edavis@fairelectionscenter.org.

¹ Christopher Uggen & Jeff Manza, Voting and Subsequent Crime and Arrest: Evidence from a Community Sample, 36 Colum. Hum. Rts. L. Rev. 193, 213 (2004); *see also* Guy Padraic Hamilton-Smith & Matt Vogel, The Violence of Voicelessness: The Impact of Felony Disenfranchisement on Recidivism, 22 Berkeley La Raza L.J. 407, 427 (2012).

SB0241_Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration

Uploaded by: Gwendolyn Levi

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 241

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

TO: Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Committee

FROM: **Gwendolyn Levi**, Member of Out For Justice

DATE: February 11, 2026

My name is Ms. Gwendolyn Levi, and I am a justice-impacted individual and a **member of Out For Justice**, a Maryland-based organization led by formerly incarcerated people working to advance dignity, equity, and full civic participation. I served 16 years of an original 400-month federal sentence for conspiracy to distribute, including nine years housed in Maryland at the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women in Jessup.

While incarcerated, many of us followed legislation closely because decisions made by this body affected nearly every aspect of our lives—inside the facility and after release. We organized, wrote letters, contacted our families, and advocated for change. Despite that civic engagement, there was one fundamental right we were denied: **the right to vote and to fully participate in our democracy**.

The right to vote is foundational. Yet thousands of Marylanders who have served their sentences remain disconnected from the democratic process due to unnecessary and avoidable bureaucratic barriers. Although Maryland law was changed in 2016 to restore voting rights automatically upon release from incarceration for a felony conviction, meaningful access to voter registration has not been guaranteed in practice.

Currently, individuals serving felony sentences are removed from the voter rolls, and while the State Board of Elections is notified when someone becomes ineligible, there is no parallel, automatic process to ensure that voter registration is restored when eligibility returns. Although legislation passed in 2021 requires that a paper voter registration form be included in release packets, this step alone has not been sufficient to ensure returning citizens are registered or even aware that their rights have been restored.

SB 241 goes further and addresses this gap. The bill would require the State Board of Elections to use existing secure processes to restore the voter registration of eligible individuals released from Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services facilities who were previously registered, or to process new registrations when appropriate. By requiring weekly data sharing from DPSCS, SB 241 ensures that voter registration restoration is timely, accurate, and reliable.

Since my release in 2020, I have worked with organizations including Out For Justice and the Maryland Justice Project to educate and register returning citizens across the state. Many people I've encountered did not know their voting rights had been restored, or did not



understand how to re-register. SB 241 would remove confusion, reduce administrative barriers, and make civic participation a standard part of successful reentry.

Civic engagement is a proven factor in successful reentry. Research shows that people who vote and engage in their communities are less likely to reoffend and more likely to build stable, connected lives. When returning citizens are welcomed back as full participants in our democracy, our communities are stronger.

Voting is the most essential form of political expression in a democratic society. **SB 241 ensures that returning citizens know their rights, have their registrations restored, and are able to meaningfully participate in Maryland's elections.**

I respectfully urge a **favorable report on SB 241**. Thank you for your time and consideration.

SB 241 - Election Law - Individuals Released from

Uploaded by: Joanne Antoine

Position: FAV

February 11, 2026

Testimony on SB 241
Election Law - Individuals Released from State Correctional Facilities - Automatic
Restoration of Voter Registration
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports SB 241 which would ensure eligible voters who are being released from Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) facilities have access to voter registration.

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.

Marylanders serving a sentence for felony convictions are prohibited from voting. The Court regularly sends a list of individuals who were once eligible to vote but are now prohibited from voting to the State Board of Elections (SBE). They are then automatically removed from the voter rolls. In 2016, Maryland law established that, upon release from incarceration, an individual with a felony conviction automatically regained the right to vote. But barriers to voting access for returning citizens persist. While SBE is required to automatically strike them from the voter rolls, there is no process to ensure their registration is restored and that they are notified of their rights. While the General Assembly passed legislation in 2021 ensuring that returning citizens had access to voter registration during the release process, the legislation did not go far enough.

While DPSCS is currently required to include voter registration forms in eligible individuals' release packets, returning a completed paper form is an inconvenience for most voters. The forms must either be returned by mail or in person at a local board of elections office, unless they are completed closer to the election and returned to a secure drop box.

SB 241 will make the voter registration process more accessible for those eligible voters who are going home. It would require that SBE use existing secure processes to restore the voter registration of any eligible voter released from a DPSCS facility who was previously registered to vote in Maryland. To facilitate the identification of these voters, each week the DPSCS would send the SBE a list of the names and new residential addresses of anyone released the preceding week from a state correctional facility. Then, SBE confirms eligibility and restores the registration or processes the new registration.

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.

Voting is the most essential form of political expression, and the right to do so is fundamental to an open democracy. SB 241 ensures returning citizens know their rights have been restored and increases their access to and participation in our elections.

We urge a favorable report.

SB241 - Favorable - John Ford.pdf

Uploaded by: John Ford

Position: FAV

Dear **Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,**

This testimony is being submitted in collaboration with Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore and Out for Justice. I am a resident of **District 46**. I am a resident of Baltimore City, and a workforce development and industrial and organizational psychology professional. I believe, professionally, spiritually, and philosophically, in the opportunity for full rehabilitation and reintegration for all citizens, even those who have committed terrible acts in their past. **I am testifying in support of SB241 - Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration.**

Currently, because persons serving jail sentences for felony convictions are prohibited from voting, the law requires that the courts provide lists of persons so convicted to the Board of Elections, who must then strike those individuals from the voter rolls. While the process of un-registering these voters is thereby made automatic, there is no process to accomplish the re-registration of people who are being released from prison and becoming eligible to vote again. They must take affirmative steps to re-register, a requirement which may get lost in the large number of tasks required of a person re-entering society after incarceration. While a job and a place to live may have to be the returning citizen's first priorities, re-establishing their ability to have a vote should be one of the first priorities of the society they are returning to. The more people who vote, the proportionately stronger our democracy is.

HB1110 would simply establish a process that reverses that by which convicted persons were removed from the voter rolls. The bill requires that the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services provide regular lists of released persons to the Board of Elections, and that the BoE then re-register whose persons on the list who were previously registered before their incarceration. This would make the process of adding returning citizens back to the voter rolls as automatic as the process of taking incarcerated citizens off the rolls. This is more equitable than the current system, under which returning citizens must take care of re-registration themselves.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of SB241 - Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

John Preston Ford
529 S East Ave
Baltimore, MD 21224

Testimony in Support of SB241_Blaha_SURJ.pdf

Uploaded by: Katherine Blaha

Position: FAV

Monday, February 9, 2026



Showing Up for Racial Justice

Dear Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

I am submitting this testimony as a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) Baltimore, a group of individuals working to mobilize white people in a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with Out for Justice, which advocates for the reform of policies and practices that adversely affect incarcerated people's successful reintegration into society. I am a resident of Baltimore City and District 41. I am testifying in **support of SB241 - Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration.**

Because persons serving jail sentences for felony convictions are prohibited from voting, the current law requires that the courts provide lists of convicted persons to the Board of Elections, who must then strike those individuals from the voter rolls. While the process of un-registering these voters is thereby made automatic, there is no comparable automatic process for re-registering people who are being released from prison and becoming eligible to vote again. Instead, released people must take affirmative steps to re-register, a requirement that can get lost in the overwhelming tasks required of a person re-entering society after incarceration.

While finding a job, a place to live, and a new sense of stability may be the returning citizen's first priorities, re-establishing their ability to vote should be one of the first priorities of the society they are returning to. The more people who vote, the stronger our democracy is.

SB241 would simply establish a process that reverses the process by which convicted persons are removed from the voter rolls. The bill requires that the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services provide regular lists of released persons to the Board of Elections, and that the Board of Elections then re-register persons on the list who were previously registered before their incarceration. This would make the process of adding

returning citizens back to the voter rolls as automatic as the process of taking incarcerated citizens off the rolls. This is more equitable than the current system and demonstrates an appropriate prioritization of citizens' right to vote.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of SB241 - Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Dr. Katherine Blaha
Baltimore, MD 21209
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) Baltimore

SB241 - Automatic voter registration restoration.d

Uploaded by: Katherine Wilkins

Position: FAV

Dear **Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,**

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with Out for Justice. I am a resident of **12A. I am testifying in support of SB241 - Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration.**



Showing Up for Racial Justice

Currently, because persons serving jail sentences for felony convictions are prohibited from voting, the law requires that the courts provide lists of persons so convicted to the Board of Elections, who must then strike those individuals from the voter rolls. While the process of un-registering these voters is thereby made automatic, there is no process to accomplish the re-registration of people who are being released from prison and becoming eligible to vote again. They must take affirmative steps to re-register, a requirement which may get lost in the large number of tasks required of a person re-entering society after incarceration. While a job and a place to live may have to be the returning citizen's first priorities, re-establishing their ability to have a vote should be one of the first priorities of the society they are returning to. The more people who vote, the proportionately stronger our democracy is.

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It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of SB241 - Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

Katherine Wilkins

5605 Foxcroft Way

Columbia MD 21045

Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

SB241 - Automatic voter registration restoration.d

Uploaded by: Lindsay Keipper

Position: FAV

Dear **Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,**

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with Out for Justice. I am a resident of **District 46** and **I am testifying in support of SB241 - Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration.**



Showing Up for Racial Justice

Currently, because persons serving jail sentences for felony convictions are prohibited from voting, the law requires that the courts provide lists of persons so convicted to the Board of Elections, who must then strike those individuals from the voter rolls. While the process of un-registering these voters is thereby made automatic, there is no process to accomplish the re-registration of people who are being released from prison and becoming eligible to vote again. They must take affirmative steps to re-register, a requirement which may get lost in the large number of tasks required of a person re-entering society after incarceration. While a job and a place to live may have to be the returning citizen's first priorities, re-establishing their ability to have a vote should be one of the first priorities of the society they are returning to. The more people who vote, the proportionately stronger our democracy is.

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It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of SB241 - Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

Lindsay Keipper

2425 Fleet St.

Baltimore, MD 21224

Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

SB 241 Testimony 2_2026.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Marijane Mnck

Position: FAV

IndivisibleHoCoMD



TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE

Education, Energy, and the Environment

SB 241

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

POSITION: Favorable

**by: Marijane Monck, Defend Democracy Team Lead,
Indivisible Howard County**

Date: 2/9/26

On behalf of our 1700+ Indivisible Howard County members, I am writing in support of SB 241. IndivisibleHoCoMD is an informal group of citizens in Howard County, MD, registered with the Indivisible Project's national network of local grassroots groups. We believe in fairness, tolerance, inclusion, and democracy.

SB 241 strengthens our democracy by automatically restoring voter registration for individuals released from state correctional facilities. While current law restores voting rights upon release, many people face confusion or administrative barriers that delay their return to the electorate. This bill creates a clear, automatic process that removes those obstacles and supports successful reentry. Voting is a fundamental way returning citizens reconnect with their communities and participate in civic life. By ensuring timely restoration of voter registration, SB241 advances equity, expands democratic participation, and helps build a more inclusive and representative democracy for all Marylanders.

Indivisible Howard County, representing 1700+ citizens in Maryland, urges a favorable report on SB 241.

SB241 OFJ TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 241 Marsha Br

Uploaded by: Marsha Briley

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 241

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

TO: Chair and Members of the House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

FROM: Marsha Briley-Savage, Reentry Coordinator, Anne Arundel County Government

DATE: February 11, 2026

POSITION: SUPPORT

My name is Marsha Briley-Savagem, and I submit this testimony in support of **Senate Bill 241**, which would remove unnecessary barriers to voter registration for eligible individuals released from Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) facilities.

Background and Professional Experience

My commitment to civic engagement for justice-impacted individuals began on February 9, 2016, when the Maryland General Assembly overrode the veto of SB 340/HB 980, restoring voting rights to more than 40,000 Marylanders. At that time, I served as Director of Reentry Services for DPSCS.

Understanding that legislation is only effective if properly implemented, I became the first—and to my knowledge, the only—official to ensure that all Transition Specialists statewide were trained by the Maryland State Board of Elections. I further required that the Board of Elections be present at all DPSCS Reentry Fairs so that individuals within 90 days of release could prepare to return to their communities as fully participating citizens.

The Reality of Current Barriers

Today, as Reentry Coordinator for Anne Arundel County Government detention facilities, I continue to see systemic barriers that prevent eligible voters from accessing voter registration:

- **The Digital Desert:** Correctional facilities are highly regulated environments. Internet access is unavailable, and neither staff nor incarcerated individuals may possess cell phones—the primary tools required for modern voter registration.
- **Institutional Resistance:** Case managers and facility staff are often overburdened and may view voter engagement efforts as an additional task rather than a core reentry responsibility.
- **Inconsistent Access:** In 2025, through collaboration with the Board of Elections and the Expand the Ballot initiative, we successfully engaged more than 100 individuals at the Ordnance Road Correctional Center. However, similar efforts at the Jennifer Road Detention Center were unsuccessful due to these structural barriers.

Access to the ballot should not depend on the persistence of individual advocates or the discretion of facility staff.



SB 241 directly addresses these challenges by establishing a secure, uniform, and automated process to restore voter registration for eligible individuals upon release from DPSCS facilities.

By requiring the electronic transfer of release data from DPSCS to the State Board of Elections, SB 241:

- Eliminates the need for internet access or mobile devices within facilities;
- Reduces the administrative burden placed on facility staff;
- Ensures consistent restoration of voter registration statewide, regardless of facility location.

Maryland has made significant progress in restoring voting rights, but without reliable systems in place, those rights remain vulnerable to administrative failure. SB 241 institutionalizes best practices, removes preventable barriers, and ensures that returning citizens are recognized as full participants in our democracy.

I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a **favorable report on SB 241**.

This bill also aligns with the mission of Out For Justice and its partners to ensure justice-impacted individuals are treated with dignity and are empowered to fully participate in civic life and democracy.

SB241 - Automatic voter registration restoration_B

Uploaded by: Melissa Badeker

Position: FAV

Dear **Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,**

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with Out for Justice. I am a resident of **District 43A. I am testifying in support of SB241 - Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration.**



Showing Up for Racial Justice

Currently, because persons serving jail sentences for felony convictions are prohibited from voting, the law requires that the courts provide lists of persons so convicted to the Board of Elections, who must then strike those individuals from the voter rolls. While the process of un-registering these voters is thereby made automatic, there is no process to accomplish the re-registration of people who are being released from prison and becoming eligible to vote again. They must take affirmative steps to re-register, a requirement which may get lost in the large number of tasks required of a person re-entering society after incarceration. While a job and a place to live may have to be the returning citizen's first priorities, re-establishing their ability to have a vote should be one of the first priorities of the society they are returning to. The more people who vote, the proportionately stronger our democracy is.

HB1110 would simply establish a process that reverses that by which convicted persons were removed from the voter rolls. The bill requires that the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services provide regular lists of released persons to the Board of Elections, and that the BoE then re-register those persons on the list who were previously registered before their incarceration. This would make the process of adding returning citizens back to the voter rolls as automatic as the process of taking incarcerated citizens off the rolls. This is more equitable than the current system, under which returning citizens must take care of re-registration themselves.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of SB241 - Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

Melissa Badeker
2800 N. Calvert St., BSMT, Baltimore MD 21218
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

SB 241 - RCVMD Testimony - AVR for Individuals Rel

Uploaded by: Michelle Whittaker

Position: FAV

February 9, 2026

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Maryland Senate
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**Re: Senate Bill 241 (House Bill 115)
Election Law - Individuals Released From State Correctional Facilities - Automatic Restoration of
Voter Registration**

Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee Members:

Ranked Choice Voting Maryland (RCV Maryland) supports SB 241(HB 115) which would ensure eligible voters who are being released from Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) facilities have access to voter registration.

We believe every eligible voter should be able to fully participate in the electoral process. Voting is a cornerstone of our representative democracy. Voting is a fundamental right and we should not create additional burdens and hurdles for any voter in Maryland.

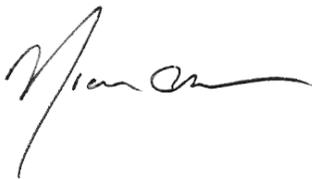
When we vote, it is an expression of our individual and collective desires on policy and our public servants. RCV Maryland believes our electoral process must ensure that every voice is heard and every vote is counted.

Currently, returning citizens who are eligible to vote still face bureaucratic obstacles in restoring their right to participate in elections. While Maryland has an automatic process to remove individuals from the voter rolls due to felony convictions and incarceration, it lacks an automatic system to restore their rights and facilitate their return to the democratic process.

SB 241 is vital because it ensures returning citizens are informed that their rights have been restored, thereby increasing their ability to access and participate in our elections.

RCV Maryland respectfully urges a favorable report for this legislation.

Sincerely,



Michelle C. Whittaker
Executive Director
Ranked Choice Voting Maryland

Maryland Catholic Conference_FAVSB241_.pdf

Uploaded by: Michelle Zelaya

Position: FAV



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 11th 2026

SB241

**Election Law - Individuals Released from State Correctional Facilities - Automatic
Restoration of Voter Registration
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of **Senate Bill 241**. The Maryland Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Senate Bill 241 strengthens Maryland's commitment to civic participation by ensuring a smoother and more efficient process for restoring voter registration to individuals returning home from State correctional facilities. Under this legislation, the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services would send the State Board of Elections a weekly list of individuals released from incarceration, including their names and new residential addresses. The State Board would then automatically restore voter registration for any individual who had been registered to vote prior to incarceration.

This policy reflects a simple but meaningful principle: when individuals complete their sentences and return to their communities, they should also regain their place in our civic life. Voting is a cornerstone of democracy and an important part of reintegration. Automatically restoring registration streamlines the process, reduces confusion, and helps ensure that returning citizens can fully participate in the communities they call home.

This legislation also aligns with broader efforts to reduce recidivism. Research consistently shows that when individuals feel connected to their communities—socially, economically, and civically—they are more likely to successfully rebuild their lives. Restoring the right to vote fosters dignity, belonging, and a sense of responsibility, all of which benefit not only returning citizens but the community.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference urges a favorable report on **Senate Bill 241**.

Nicole D. Porter testimony for MD Senate Bill 241

Uploaded by: Nicole Porter

Position: FAV



Testimony of Nicole D. Porter
Senior Director of Advocacy
The Sentencing Project

In Support of SB 241 - Favorable
*Guarantee Voting Rights for Individuals
Released From State Correctional Facilities*

February 11, 2026

Established in 1986, The Sentencing Project works for a fair and effective U.S. criminal justice system by promoting reforms in sentencing policy and addressing unjust racial disparities and practices. We are grateful for this opportunity to submit testimony endorsing Senate Bill 241 and urge its favorable report. The Sentencing Project thanks State Senator Malcolm Augustin for his primary sponsorship on Senate Bill 241.

I am Nicole D. Porter, Senior Director of Advocacy for The Sentencing Project. I have had extensive engagement in public policy research on criminal legal issues for many years, with a particular focus on sentencing, collateral consequences of incarceration, and racial disparity. I have also authored numerous journal articles, reports and public commentary on shifting trends in state policy impacting criminal legal reform including voting rights for people with felony convictions. It is my honor to submit testimony to the Maryland Assembly to guarantee voting rights for all persons completing their sentence inside prisons and jails regardless of their crime of conviction.

Senate Bill 241 includes several provisions to:

- Require the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to send a weekly list of individuals released from state correctional facilities to the State Board of Elections.
- Require the State Board of Election to identify individuals registered to vote prior to incarceration and restore their voter registration at their new address, granting them active voter status.
- Ensure that each individual receives a voter notification card detailing their registration status and eligibility to vote in all elections, along with instructions for declining registration or updating their address.

Momentum to Guarantee the Vote

Felony disenfranchisement laws and policies can be traced back to the founding of the United States when settler colonialists implemented the policy during their occupation of North America. The nation was founded on a paradox, a supposed experiment in democracy that was limited to wealthy white male property owners and excluded women, African Americans, persons who could not read, poor people, and persons with felony convictions. Over the course of two hundred years all of those voting exclusions have been eliminated with the exception of people with felony convictions. Vermont and Maine, the only states that have never disenfranchised prisoners, are also the whitest states in the nation.¹

Enacting Senate Bill 241 would be part of Maryland's long arc to guarantee voting rights for persons impacted by the criminal legal system. Maryland is among twenty-six states and Washington, DC that expanded voting rights to citizens with felony convictions since 1997,² Maryland expanded voting rights to persons completing their sentence on felony probation and parole in 2016.³ Maryland is one of 23 states that ban voting for persons in prison with a felony conviction while allowing others to vote in

¹ Gross, D. (2020). *Why Shouldn't Prisoners Be Voters?* The New Yorker. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/the-future-of-democracy/why-shouldnt-prisoners-be-voters>

² Uggen, C., Larson, R., Shannon, S., Stewart, R., & Hauf, M. (2024). <https://www.sentencingproject.org/reports/locked-out-2024-four-million-denied-voting-rights-due-to-a-felony-conviction/>. The Sentencing Project.

³ Porter, N.D., & McLeod, M. (2023). [Expanding the Vote: State Felony Disenfranchisement Reforms, 1997-2023](https://www.sentencingproject.org/reports/expanding-the-vote-state-felony-disenfranchisement-reforms-1997-2023). The Sentencing Project.

community. The number of Maryland residents disenfranchised from voting in prison and jail numbered 16,270 as of 2024⁴, while nationally, more than 4 million Americans are disenfranchised.

Public opinion polls show that a majority - 56% of likely American voters - support voting rights for people completing their sentence inside and outside of prison.⁵

Recent voting rights reforms to guarantee access for incarcerated or recently released voters include:

- Louisiana lawmakers passed legislation requiring the state Department of Public Safety and Corrections to inform individuals who have completed their sentence of their right to vote.⁶
- Michigan officials adopted legislation authorizing automatic voter registration for persons leaving prison.⁷
- Washington state lawmakers adopted Senate Bill 5077 to allow the Governor, in partnership with the Secretary of State, to authorize automatic voter registration at designated state agencies. The bill creates a legal pathway for county jails and state prisons to automatically register incarcerated residents.⁸

Voting and Community Safety

When this nation was founded as an experiment in democracy two centuries ago, it was a very limited experiment rooted in a paradox. Women were not permitted to vote, nor were African Americans or people who were poor or could not read. Over time evolving public sentiment has enfranchised all those groups, and we now look back on that moment with a great deal of national embarrassment. It is long past time to remedy the exclusion of the last remaining group of citizens who are denied the right to vote. This would represent a healthy expansion of our democracy and community safety.

Furthermore, voting is strongly correlated with better public safety outcomes. Voting is among several prosocial behaviors for justice impacted persons, like getting a college education, that is associated with reduced criminal conduct.⁹ Having the right to vote or voting is related to reduced recidivism for persons with a criminal legal history.¹⁰ Disenfranchisement has no deterrent effect on crime.¹¹

Felony disenfranchisement also ignores the important distinction between legitimate punishment for a crime and one's rights as a citizen. Convicted individuals may be sentenced to prison, but they generally maintain their basic rights. Even if someone is held in a maximum security prison cell, they still have the

⁴ Maryland's Department of Legislative Services might be able to provide an updated analysis on persons completing their felony sentence in state prisons and local jails who are impacted by HB 627. *Please see [Racial Equity Impact Notes](#).*

⁵ The Sentencing Project. (2022). New National Poll shows Majority Favor Guaranteed Right to Vote for All. <https://www.sentencingproject.org/fact-sheet/new-national-poll-showsmajority-favor-guaranteed-right-to-vote-for-all/>

⁶ Porter, N. and McLeod, M. (2023). *Expanding the Vote State Felony Disenfranchisement Reform, 1997-2023*. The Sentencing Project

⁷ Polo, Michelle (2023). New Michigan Law means people leaving prison will automatically be registered to vote. National Public Radio. <https://www.npr.org/2023/12/16/1219695211/new-michigan-law-means-people-leaving-prison-will-automatically-be-registered-to>

⁸ Washington State Legislature. *SB 5077 – 2025-26 Bill Summary*. (2025). Retrieved January 29, 2026

⁹ Bozick, R., Steele, J., Davis, L., & Turner, S. (2018). Does providing inmates with education improve postrelease outcomes? A meta analysis of correctional education programs in the United States. *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 14, 389-428.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-018-9334-6>; Uggen, C., Manza, J., & Behrens, A. (2013). 'Less than the average citizen': Stigma, role transition and the civic reintegration of convicted felons. In S. Maruna & R. Immarigeon (Eds.), *After crime and punishment* (pp. 258-287). Willan.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781843924203>; Uggen, C., & Manza, J. (2004). Voting and subsequent crime and arrest: Evidence from a community sample. *Columbia Human Rights Law Review*, 36(1), 193-216.

¹⁰ Hamilton-Smith, G. P., & Vogel, M. (2012). The violence of voicelessness: The impact of felony disenfranchisement on recidivism. *Berkeley La Raza Law Journal*, 22, 407-432. <https://doi.org/10.15779/Z38Z66F>; Uggen & Manza (2004).

¹¹ Poulos, C. (2019). *The fight against felony disenfranchisement*. Harvard Law and Policy Review Blog. <https://journals.law.harvard.edu/lpr/2019/05/30/the-fight-against-felon-disenfranchisement/>

right to get married or divorced, or to buy or sell property. And to the extent that voting is an extension of free speech, consider that a person in prison may have an op-ed published, perhaps with greater impact than casting a single vote. Persons who are currently disenfranchised are anchoring policy change campaigns in states across the country including Nebraska and Texas.¹²

The Case to Guarantee Voting Rights for All

Felony disenfranchisement policies, including for persons completing their prison sentence, are inherently undemocratic. The United States is very much out of line with world standards, and it is important to take a fresh look at the rationale and impact of policies that can only be described as aberrant by international norms.¹³

A prison term results in barriers to employment including reduced lifetime earnings, and restrictions on access to various public benefits. Families of incarcerated residents themselves experience the shame and stigma of incarceration, as well as the loss of financial and emotional support with a loved one behind bars. For the community at large, the challenges of reentry result in high rates of recidivism, extraction of social and political capital, and the collateral impact of mass incarceration. Returning voting rights to those with a felony conviction is but one small way Maryland can expand its democracy while bettering public safety outcomes for everyone.

The Sentencing Project applauds Senator Augustine's championing of guaranteeing voting rights for justice-impacted voters and urges a favorable report of Senate Bill 241 from the Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee.

¹² Demetrius Gatson, an organizer with the ACLU of Nebraska, is disenfranchised while completing her parole sentence.; Jorge Renaud, former director of criminal justice for LatinoJustice, has helped craft state level policy while disenfranchised and completing his parole sentence in Texas.

¹³ Ispahani, L. (2009). Voting rights and human rights: A comparative analysis of criminal disenfranchisement laws. In A. C. Ewald & B. Rottinghaus (Eds.), *Criminal disenfranchisement in an international perspective* (pp.25-58). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511576713.003>

2-11 SB 241 Election Law - Individuals Released fr

Uploaded by: Nikki Tyree

Position: FAV



**TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND ENVIRONMENT
COMMITTEE**

**SB 241 Election Law - Individuals Released from State Correctional Facilities -
Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration**

POSITION – Support

BY: Linda T. Kohn, President

Date: February 11, 2026

The League of Women Voters of Maryland believes that our election systems should produce candidates and elected officials who represent the community, are feasible to implement, increase voter participation, and help ensure minority views have some influence.

While it would be a small change, the passage of SB 241 would ensure that those who are making the transition from being incarcerated to being back at home are able to have their voting rights fully restored. Oftentimes, those who are transitioning become some of the most vulnerable members of our community. They are released, usually with minimal state resources, to figure out life on their own. This can include updating driver's licenses and healthcare, re-establishing themselves in their homes and families, and finding work. LWVMD believes that having voting rights restored should not be considered or seen as an obstacle

To have a robust, meaningful democracy, Maryland needs to ensure all eligible voters can vote. SB 241 is a common-sense approach to re-enfranchising people who deserve to have their voices heard. Some opposition would have you believe that this would be a laborious process and would weigh too heavily on those involved. LWVMD disagrees wholeheartedly with this sentiment. Because it is done weekly, fewer people would be going through the process at any given time. More than that, SBE is capable of implementing this process using the technology they already use.

For the above reasons, LWVMD urges a favorable report on SB 241.

SB241_FAV_ACLUMD.pdf

Uploaded by: Olivia Spaccasi

Position: FAV



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

February 11, 2026

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

FAVORABLE

OLIVIA SPACCASI
PUBLIC POLICY
ANALYST

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ANDREW FREEMAN
GENERAL COUNSEL

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.”¹

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.

AMERICAN CIVIL
LIBERTIES UNION
FOUNDATION OF
MARYLAND

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

SB 241 - RCVMD Testimony - AVR for Individuals Rel

Uploaded by: Owen Anderson

Position: FAV

February 9, 2026

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Maryland Senate
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**Re: Senate Bill 241 (House Bill 115)
Election Law - Individuals Released From State Correctional Facilities - Automatic Restoration of
Voter Registration**

Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee Members:

Ranked Choice Voting Maryland (RCV Maryland) supports SB 241(HB 115) which would ensure eligible voters who are being released from Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) facilities have access to voter registration.

We believe every eligible voter should be able to fully participate in the electoral process. Voting is a cornerstone of our representative democracy. Voting is a fundamental right and we should not create additional burdens and hurdles for any voter in Maryland.

When we vote, it is an expression of our individual and collective desires on policy and our public servants. RCV Maryland believes our electoral process must ensure that every voice is heard and every vote is counted.

Currently, returning citizens who are eligible to vote still face bureaucratic obstacles in restoring their right to participate in elections. While Maryland has an automatic process to remove individuals from the voter rolls due to felony convictions and incarceration, it lacks an automatic system to restore their rights and facilitate their return to the democratic process.

SB 241 is vital because it ensures returning citizens are informed that their rights have been restored, thereby increasing their ability to access and participate in our elections.

RCV Maryland respectfully urges a favorable report for this legislation.

Sincerely,



Michelle C. Whittaker
Executive Director
Ranked Choice Voting Maryland

Eckel FAV - SB241 - Automatic voter registration r

Uploaded by: Rianna Eckel

Position: FAV

Dear **Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Honorable Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,**



Showing Up for Racial Justice

My name is Rianna Eckel. I'm a resident of the 43rd district and a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore. Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore is a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with Out for Justice. **I am writing in support of SB241 - Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration.**

Currently, because persons serving jail sentences for felony convictions are prohibited from voting, the law requires that the courts provide lists of persons so convicted to the Board of Elections, who must then strike those individuals from the voter rolls. While the process of un-registering these voters is thereby made automatic, there is no process to accomplish the re-registration of people who are being released from prison and becoming eligible to vote again. They must take affirmative steps to re-register, a requirement which may get lost in the large number of tasks required of a person re-entering society after incarceration. While a job and a place to live may have to be the returning citizen's first priorities, re-establishing their ability to have a vote should be one of the first priorities of the society they are returning to. The more people who vote, the proportionately stronger our democracy is.

SB241 would simply establish a process that reverses that by which convicted persons were removed from the voter rolls. The bill requires that the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services provide regular lists of released persons to the Board of Elections, and that the BoE then re-register those persons on the list who were previously registered before their incarceration. This would make the process of adding returning citizens back to the voter rolls as automatic as the process of taking incarcerated citizens off the rolls. This is more equitable than the current system, under which returning citizens must take care of re-registration themselves.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to issue a favorable report on **SB241 - Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Rianna Eckel
2300 Hunter St, Baltimore MD 21218
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

Testimony in support of SB0241 - Automatic Restora

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

SB0241_RichardKaplowitz_FAV

02/11/2026

Richard Keith Kaplowitz
Frederick, MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON SB#/0241- POSITION: FAVORABLE

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

TO: Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#0241, **Election Law - Individuals Released From State Correctional Facilities - Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration**

The Brennan Center for Justice has noted that ¹

Millions of Americans are barred from voting because of criminal convictions in their past. Felony disenfranchisement laws — relics of Jim Crow — hit Black Americans disproportionately hard because of bias in the criminal justice system. The Brennan Center advances policies to re-enfranchise Americans who are living in the community, and we fight policies making it harder for Americans with past convictions to vote.

As reported by the ACLU ² in their press release *New Report: United States a Global Outlier in Denying Voting Rights Due to Criminal Convictions*

“Wide access to voting is a cornerstone of rights-respecting, democratic government, which is why the right to vote is protected in international human rights law and why the U.S. should reform its outlier status on voting rights,” said **Alison Leal Parker, deputy US director at Human Rights Watch**. “The right to vote, and the legitimacy of the democratic system in the United States should not depend on its criminal legal system, which is built upon and perpetuates discrimination.”

We will do this by requiring the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to transmit a list that includes the name and new residential address of individuals released from incarceration at a State correctional facility to the State Board of Elections on a weekly basis; requiring the State Board to automatically restore the voter registration of certain individuals released from State correctional facilities who were registered to vote in the State before being incarcerated; etc. Maryland can join twenty-six states and the District of Columbia in restoration of voting rights immediately after an incarcerated individual is released.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#/0241.

¹ <https://www.brennancenter.org/topics/voting-elections/voting-rights-restoration>

² <https://www.aclu.org/press-releases/new-report-united-states-a-global-outlier-in-denying-voting-rights-due-to-criminal-convictions>

SB241_MDSierraClub_fav 11Feb2026.pdf

Uploaded by: Richard Norling

Position: FAV



P.O. Box 278
Riverdale, MD 20738

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Testimony on: SB 241 Election Law – Individuals Released From State Correctional Facilities – Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 11, 2026

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club urges a favorable report on SB 241. The bill will make restoration of voter registration more automatic and seamless when individuals are released from incarceration.

Under existing Maryland law, individuals convicted of a felony do not have the right to vote while incarcerated but regain the right to vote when their incarceration ends unless they were convicted for buying or selling votes. Existing law also requires that released prisoners be informed that they have the right to vote and given an opportunity to register as they are released.

This bill requires the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) to send weekly lists of individuals released from incarceration and their new addresses to the State Board of Elections. The bill requires the State Board of Elections to then identify each individual on the list who was registered to vote before incarceration, and to restore their voter registration at their new Maryland address.

The bill requires the State Elections Director to send a notice to each such individual's new residential address telling them that they have been re-registered and are eligible to vote and giving information about how to update their registration. The bill prohibits releasing to the public the fact that a voter's registration was restored through the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services.

The Sierra Club and its members advocate on behalf of both the natural and human environments, including promoting racial and social equity. As a grassroots organization, we believe that voting should be as accessible and convenient as possible for all individuals who are eligible to vote. This bill will make voter registration more automatic and convenient for returning citizens as they are released from confinement.

For those reasons, we urge a favorable report on SB 241.

Rich Norling
Chair, Voting Rights Committee
Rich.Norling@MDSierra.org

Josh Tulkin
Chapter Director
Josh.Tulkin@MDSierra.org

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.

SB241 - Automatic voter registration restoration_T

Uploaded by: Theresa M. Hoffman

Position: FAV

Dear Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with Out for Justice. I am a resident of District 43b. I am testifying in support of SB241 - Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration.



Showing Up for Racial Justice

Currently, because persons serving jail sentences for felony convictions are prohibited from voting, the law requires that the courts provide lists of persons so convicted to the Board of Elections, who must then strike those individuals from the voter rolls. While the process of un-registering these voters is thereby made automatic, there is no process to accomplish the re-registration of people who are being released from prison and becoming eligible to vote again. They must take affirmative steps to re-register, a requirement which may get lost in the large number of tasks required of a person re-entering society after incarceration. While a job and a place to live may have to be the returning citizen's first priorities, re-establishing their ability to have a vote should be one of the first priorities of the society they are returning to. The more people who vote, the proportionately stronger our democracy is.

SB241 would simply establish a process that reverses that by which convicted persons were removed from the voter rolls. The bill requires that the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services provide regular lists of released persons to the Board of Elections, and that the BoE then re-register those persons on the list who were previously registered before their incarceration. This would make the process of adding returning citizens back to the voter rolls as automatic as the process of taking incarcerated citizens off the rolls. This is more equitable than the current system, under which returning citizens must take care of re-registration themselves.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of SB241 - Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Theresa M. Hoffman
803 Seaward Rd., Towson, MD 21286
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

SB0241_Election_Law_ Automatic Restoration of Vote

Uploaded by: Trina Selden

Position: FAV



WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 241
Individuals Released From State Correctional Facilities-
Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration

TO: Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee

FROM: **Trina Selden**, Founder and Executive Director, Out For Justice

DATE: **February 11, 2026**

My name is **Trina Selden**, and I am the Founder and Executive Director of **Out for Justice, Inc.**, a community-based organization dedicated to engaging, educating, and empowering people impacted by the legal system to build collective power, reduce recidivism, and dismantle harmful and exclusionary policies. I submit this testimony in **strong support of Senate Bill 241**.

For nearly two decades, Out for Justice has worked to advance fair elections, protect access to the ballot, and ensure that communities historically excluded from civic life—particularly returning citizens, Black communities, and low-income residents—are able to fully participate in our democracy.

When I came home from prison in 2003, reentry felt almost impossible. I struggled to obtain basic identification—my birth certificate, Social Security card, and driver's license. But one of the most devastating losses I experienced was the loss of my **right to vote**. Even after completing probation, I was misinformed and denied the ability to register. At a time when I was rebuilding my life, I was not recognized as a valid participant in the democratic process. My voice did not count.

That experience is why I founded **Out for Justice in 2006**—to challenge the dead ends justice-impacted people face and to restore dignity, voice, and opportunity. Our work helped launch **Ban the Box** in Maryland and paved the way for reforms like the **Value My Vote Act**, restoring voting rights to tens of thousands of Marylanders. These victories share a simple lesson: **people succeed when systems are designed to include them, not exclude them**.

SB241 applies that lesson in a practical and common-sense way. The bill requires the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to share release information with the State Board of Elections so that individuals who were previously registered to vote have their registration **automatically restored upon release**. It also ensures returning citizens receive notice of their status and information on how to update or decline registration.

Although Maryland has made important progress on voting rights, the current system still places unnecessary burdens on people during one of the most unstable moments of their lives. Gaps between release and registration—often requiring visits to the MVA or navigating unfamiliar processes—lead to confusion, missed opportunities, and unnecessary disenfranchisement.



SB241 closes that gap by aligning voter registration with the release process, when people are already receiving critical reentry information. It reflects reality: people leaving incarceration are focused on housing, employment, health care, and reconnecting with family. They should not have to wait, guess, or jump through hoops to regain their voice.

This is not only about access—it is about **public safety and community stability**. Research consistently shows that civic engagement and a sense of belonging reduce recidivism and strengthen communities. Disenfranchisement isolates people at the very moment we should be encouraging responsibility, connection, and investment.

SB 241 also benefits the State by reducing administrative burden, minimizing errors, and creating a more efficient and reliable process for election officials. It is a policy that works for returning citizens **and** for government.

At its core, **SB241 affirms that incarceration should not permanently sever someone's relationship with democracy**. It separates punishment from fundamental human rights and strengthens our shared civic life.

For these reasons, **Out for Justice and I strongly urge a favorable report on SB241.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Trina Selden
Founder and Executive Director
Out For Justice

SB 241 - SWASC - Auto Voter Re-registration.pdf

Uploaded by: UM SWASC

Position: FAV

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 241
**Election Law - Individuals Released From State Correctional Facilities - Automatic
Restoration of Voter Registration**
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
February 11, 2026

Social Work Advocates for Social Change strongly supports SB 241, which would restore active voter registration status to formerly incarcerated Marylanders immediately upon release from Maryland correctional facilities. It would require the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to inform the State Board of Elections (SBE) of Marylanders released each week, so the SBE can then restore their voter registration, update their address, and notify them of their registration and eligibility to vote.

SB 241 advances the legislature's previous work to restore voting rights. In 2015, the Maryland General Assembly overwhelmingly supported House Bill 980, which qualified formerly incarcerated people to vote immediately upon reentry and instantly restored the right to vote for approximately 40,000 Marylanders.^{1,2} Passing SB 241 continues Maryland's leadership as a state that allows and encourages *every* individual to understand and participate in the systems that govern them.

SB 241 helps address the needs and realities of Marylanders impacted by incarceration by automatically re-connecting them to their previous civic engagement. Our position as social work graduate students gives us unique insight into the lived realities of incarceration and reentry. Through our practicum placements, we observe systems up close, hearing directly from the people most affected by public policy. One of our coalition members, who served women through the TAMAR (Trauma, Addiction, Mental Health & Recovery) Program at the Baltimore County Detention Center, witnessed firsthand the conditions under which individuals were incarcerated – and later released – that were often inhumane and destabilizing. Many individuals left the correctional facility without meeting with a social worker, without access to their Social Security information, without financial resources, without stable housing, and often without the voter registration packet the State is required to provide. When someone is released with no phone, transportation, ID, or housing, voter registration understandably falls to the bottom of the priority list. At the same time, civic participation is one of the strongest indicators of successful reintegration and reduced recidivism.³

SB 241 ensures that former voters return home as active voters by removing an unnecessary administrative barrier without requiring them to navigate yet another bureaucratic process during an already overwhelming moment of transition.⁴ For individuals whose basic needs are not yet met, automatic restoration is more than administrative efficiency: it is trauma-informed practice.⁵ It acknowledges the realities of reentry and ensures the State fulfills its responsibility to preserve access to rights it has already restored.

Inviting formerly incarcerated Marylanders back into political participation also serves as an invitation back into the community. Many individuals reentering society have endured profound dehumanization. Our coalition members have witnessed incarcerated individuals be subjected to strip searches, misuse of pepper spray, sleeping on uncleaned one-inch foam mats, and denial of toilet paper or menstrual products. Demonstrating that this community is welcomed, valued, and equally deserving of civic participation is one of the most effective therapeutic tools we can offer.⁶ Their voices matter, and a system that claims to support rehabilitation must allow space for those voices to shape the world they return to. Labeling people as “other” only undermines reintegration; restoring full civic belonging strengthens it.

SB 241 is also transformative as it reflects the national momentum seen across the country, with states like Michigan, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, which have passed legislation that implements automatic voter registration.⁷ These states have seen similar legislation boost both the belief that one's voice matters, and their confidence in participating in their government.

Maryland must not stop at simply qualifying formerly incarcerated people to vote, but rather move towards establishing automatic processes that connect and reconnect Marylanders to civic engagement, like proposed in SB 241. As such, **Social Work Advocates for Social Change urges a favorable report on SB 241.**

Social Work Advocates for Social Change is a coalition of MSW students at the University of Maryland School of Social Work that seeks to promote equity and justice through public policy, and to engage the communities impacted by public policy in the policymaking process.

¹ Brennan Center for Justice. (2020). *Voting rights restoration efforts in Maryland*. Brennan Center for Justice. <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/voting-rights-restoration-efforts-maryland>

² Election Law–Voting Rights–Ex-Felons, H.B. 980, Maryland General Assembly, (2015). https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2015RS/Chapters_noln/Ch_6_hb0980t.pdf

³ Walker, H., Stewart, R., Libal, R. (2025). *Expanding Electoral Engagement Among Justice-Impacted People*. The Sentencing Project. <https://www.sentencingproject.org/policy-brief/expanding-electoral-engagement-among-justice-impacted-people/>

⁴ Jackson-Gleich, G. & Yeary, S.T. (2020). *Eligible, but excluded: A guide to removing the barriers to jail voting*. Prison Policy Initiative. https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/jail_voting.html

⁵ Walker et al.

⁶ Budd, K.M. & Monazzam, N. (2023). *Increasing Public Safety by Restoring Voting Rights*. The Sentencing Project. <https://www.sentencingproject.org/policy-brief/increasing-public-safety-by-restoring-voting-rights/>

⁷ Congressional Black Caucus Foundation. (2024). *Unshackling the Vote: A New Chapter for Formerly Incarcerated Americans*. <https://www.cbcfinc.org/blog/unshackling-the-vote-a-new-chapter-for-formerly-incarcerated-americans>

MD_Testimony_HB115-SB0241 - 2.2.26.pdf

Uploaded by: Yehesuah Downie

Position: FAV



February 2nd, 2026

Chair Delegate Melissa Wells
Vice Chair Delegate Kenneth Kerr
145 Lowe House Office Building
142 Lowe House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Election Law - Individuals Released from State Correctional Facilities - Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration

On behalf of Campaign Legal Center (“CLC”), I am pleased to submit this testimony in support of HB 115 to add the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services as an automatic voter registration agency. I am providing this testimony at the request of Common Cause Maryland. As someone with a past felony conviction myself, this bill hits home for me.

My name is Yehesuah Downie, and I am the Restore Your Vote organizer for CLC’s Voting Rights program. CLC is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization, based in Washington DC, that works to protect and strengthen American democracy across all levels of government. Our Restore Your Vote program helps restore voting rights to people with past convictions by providing direct rights restoration services and empowering community leaders to understand and monitor implementation of rights restoration laws.

The voter registration process is one of the most significant barriers to voting in the United States. This barrier is particularly high for formerly incarcerated voters. The rules for voting after a felony conviction can be confusing, and like I did, many individuals believe a felony conviction is a lifetime ban on voting. In Maryland, your right to vote is automatically restored upon release from incarceration for a felony conviction – this bill would help activate that right and ensure that people are registered with minimal effort and without any extra hurdles.

HB 115 would make the voting process easier for formerly incarcerated Maryland residents by lowering the registration barrier and encouraging participation for those who are eligible. With this bill, people would be registered to vote upon release of

incarceration unless they opt out, similar to what is already done at the Department of Motor Vehicles. With HB 115, Maryland would be a leader in voting rights restoration, and would be one of the first few states to adopt auto registration upon release from incarceration.

Studies show that voting is correlated with stronger and more successful re-entry, as people feel a sense of belonging and connection to their communities.¹ All of us deserve a say in who represents us in office, from the halls of Congress to local elections that determine who serves on our children's schoolboard.

Our democracy works best when everyone can participate. HB 115 is a step forward in creating a more representative and more reflective democracy in Maryland. Thank you for your time.

Respectfully submitted,

Yehesuah Downie

Campaign Legal Center
1101 14th St. NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20005

¹ Kristen M. Budd and Niki Monazzam, The Sentencing Project, Increasing Public Safety by Restoring Voting Rights (April 25, 2023), <https://www.sentencingproject.org/policy-brief/increasing-public-safety-by-restoring-voting-rights/>.

This bill is probably unconstitutional and I do s

Uploaded by: Tom Wieland

Position: UNF

This bill is probably unconstitutional and I do support this, please vote it down, thanks

DPSCS_SB 241_LOI.pdf

Uploaded by: Catherine Kahl

Position: INFO



Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services

Office of Government & Legislative Affairs

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DATA, POLICY AND GRANTS

RENARD BROOKS
ASSISTANT SECRETARY
PROGRAMS, TREATMENT AND
REENTRY SERVICES

JASON DAVIDSON
DIRECTOR

BILL: SENATE BILL 241

POSITION: LETTER OF INFORMATION

EXPLANATION: Senate Bill 241 requires the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services provide a list of incarcerated individuals released from incarceration to the State Board of Elections, who will then automatically restore voter registration for those who were registered to vote prior to incarceration.

- The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services operates 13 State correctional facilities housing offenders sentenced to periods of incarceration for 18 months and longer. The Department also oversees five facilities located in Baltimore City that houses pretrial detainees as well as incarcerated individuals sentenced to incarceration for periods of 18 months and less
- The Department understands the importance of voting and is committed to ensuring all eligible voters incarcerated in State correctional facilities are afforded the right to vote and that each eligible voter has access to voter material, including registration applications and mail in ballot request forms.
- The Department has a robust voter program in place and works collaboratively with the State Board of Elections (SBE) and the local boards to facilitate voting for eligible incarcerated individuals in State correctional facilities.
- Secure ballot boxes are located in all State correctional facilities so incarcerated individuals may easily submit election related material, including voter registration applications, absentee ballot applications and ballots to the SBE. The local boards pick up the election material at designated times.
- The Department ensures election notices, deadlines, voter eligibility and restoration of rights information are posted throughout correctional facilities and available through case management. This information, along with voter registration forms, is also included in every incarcerated individual's release packet.

- Implementing SB 241, will require the SBE and the Department to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding that prohibits sharing criminal history record information with the public and restricts its use to only the purposes permitted under federal regulations governing dissemination to noncriminal justice State agencies.
- Finally, the bill requires the Department provide a weekly list to the SBE of individuals released in the previous week. However, after an individual's release, the Division of Parole and Probation initiates a case and conducts an intake interview, usually within one week, during which a verified residential address is confirmed. As such, providing a list monthly would yield more accurate and dependable addresses.

CONCLUSION: The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services respectfully requests this Committee consider this information as it deliberates on Senate Bill 241.