

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 115

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: January 30, 2026

POSITION: SUPPORT

Background and Professional Experience

My commitment to civic engagement for the justice-impacted population began on February 9, 2016, when the Maryland General Assembly [overrode a veto of SB 340/HB 980](#). This landmark legislation restored the right to vote for 40,000 Marylanders. At the time, I served as the Director of Reentry Services for the [Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services \(DPSCS\)](#). Recognizing that a law is only as strong as its implementation, I became the first and only official to ensure that all Transition Specialists statewide were trained by the Board of Elections. I mandated that the Board of Elections be a staple at all Reentry Fairs, ensuring individuals within 90 days of release were prepared to reintegrate as full citizens.

The Reality of Current Barriers

Currently, as the Reentry Coordinator for Anne Arundel County Government Detention Facilities, I see firsthand the systemic "deadlocks" that prevent eligible voters from accessing the ballot:

1. **The Digital Desert:** Correctional facilities are strictly regulated environments where staff and the population are prohibited from possessing cell phones, and internet access is nonexistent. These are the two primary tools required for modern registration.
2. **Institutional Resistance:** There is a significant human barrier. Facility case managers and staff are often unmotivated to support voter initiatives, viewing them as "just another task" or extra work on top of already perceived heavy caseloads.
3. **Inconsistency in Access:** Last year, in collaboration with the Board of Elections and the Expand the Ballot initiative, we successfully engaged over 100 individuals at the Ordnance Road Correctional Center (average population 170). However, we were unable to coordinate these same logistics at the Jennifer Road Detention Center due to the aforementioned barriers.

The Solution: HB 115

I have spent my career "pushing the envelope" to advocate for the removal of these barriers. Still, rights should not depend on the extraordinary effort of a single or the willingness of facility staff.

HB 115 solves these deadlocks by:

- **Automating the Process:** By requiring the electronic transfer of data directly to the State Board of Elections, it bypasses the need for internet access and mobile devices within the facility.
- **Reducing Staff Burden:** It removes the reliance on unmotivated or overworked facility staff to manually facilitate registration.

- Ensuring Uniformity: It guarantees that every individual released from a Maryland facility has their rights restored, regardless of whether they are at Ordnance Road or Jennifer Road.

Conclusion

We must move past a system that requires advocates to fight for basic technological access to exercise a constitutional right. **HB 115** institutionalizes the progress we have made and ensures that every returning citizen is seen, heard, and registered.

I respectfully urge a **favorable report** on HB 115.