



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 52

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

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, I am a justice-impacted Marylander, and member of Out For Justice. I support Houe Bill 52.

I served 16 years of an original 400-month federal sentence for conspiracy to distribute. During that time, I spent nine years housed in Maryland at the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women in Jessup. Inside, many of us tracked legislation closely because decisions made in Annapolis shaped almost every part of our lives—health care, education, reentry preparation, family connection, and basic dignity. We organized, wrote letters, and advocated through the limited channels we had. But there was one essential tool of democracy we did not have: **the ability to vote.**

HB 52 fixes that. The bill would allow Marylanders who are incarcerated for felony convictions to **register to vote** by removing incarceration as a disqualification for voter registration. It also requires the State Board of Elections to create a **toll-free voter hotline for incarcerated individuals** so people can get accurate information, request election materials, and report voting-rights violations—developed in collaboration with DPSCS and correctional facilities.

Since my release in 2020, I have worked with organizations including Out For Justice, the Maryland Justice Project, and civic partners to educate and register returning citizens. Many people still don't realize that in Maryland, voting rights are restored upon release (and that people incarcerated for misdemeanors can vote). HB 52 would allow us to extend that same civic education to those still inside—so that when people return home, they return as engaged community members, not as permanent outsiders to democracy.

Supporters of this reform estimate that **more than 16,000 Marylanders** are currently disenfranchised due to criminal convictions, and HB 52 would be a major step toward ensuring our democracy includes everyone it governs.

Passing HB 52 would also move Maryland toward the small group of U.S. jurisdictions that do not strip voting rights because of incarceration—**Maine, Vermont, Puerto Rico, and Washington, DC**—and it would affirm that voting is a fundamental right, not a privilege reserved for the few.

I respectfully urge a **favorable report on HB 52**. Thank you for your time and consideration.