

Dear **Members of the Government, Labor, and Elections 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. I am testifying in support of SB241 - Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration.**



Showing Up for Racial Justice

This is the Senate version of HB115, which you approved with amendments earlier this session, and which went on to be passed by the House.

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.

Thank you for understanding the importance of this issue and supporting the automatic restoration of voting rights for the formerly incarcerated by voting in favor of approval for HB115. I ask that you please give a similar favorable report on **SB241 - Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

Lindsay Keipper

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Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore