



OUT FOR JUSTICE

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB89/HB52

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

TO: Senator Charles E. Sydnor, III, Chair, and members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

FROM: Ikemefuna Chukwurah, Behind the Wall Out For Justice

Member

DATE: February 11, 2026

My name is Ikemefuna Chukwurah, and I am a Behind the Wall Member of Out for Justice. I respectfully urge this body to issue a favorable report on this bill.

Since the beginning of time, prison has been where men and women are sent to be punished for crimes or for political differences. Historically, incarceration has also meant disenfranchisement. Most of those affected were, and continue to be, people of color—individuals who cannot vote during any election while incarcerated due to felony convictions, and in some states, still cannot vote even after their release.

Within the past 40 to 50 years, Maryland has made a gradual transition from simply calling prisons prisons to identifying them as correctional institutions.

“Correctional” implies the process of correcting something, while “institution” refers to a place where an organization takes care of people for an extended period of time. This shift reflects the State of Maryland’s recognition that it cannot simply incarcerate men and women for violations, but must also commit to correcting thinking and behavior, while identifying those with the ability to learn and retain work skills that will help them successfully re-enter society.

Maryland has made meaningful progress in this regard, which leads me to believe that the state can also pass the Voting Rights for All Act. We simply need to understand its importance and commit to making it a reality.



There are many men and women incarcerated in Maryland for felony charges who deserve to be re-enfranchised. Like me, they remain deeply disappointed that society continues to deny us the right to vote because of past mistakes—mistakes that, in some cases, were made when we were teenagers. It is time to codify the enfranchisement of all incarcerated people . Please pass this bill, thank you.