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February 13, 2024

TO: The Honorable Vanessa Atterbearly
Chair, Ways and Means Committee

FROM: Tiffany Johnson Clark
Chief Counsel, Legislative Affairs, Office of the Attorney General

RE: House Bill 627 - Election Law - Automatic Voter Registration - State
Correctional Facilities - **Support**

The Office of the Attorney General requests the Committee to give House Bill 627 - Election Law - Automatic Voter Registration - State Correctional Facilities, sponsored by Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins, a favorable report. House Bill 627 designates the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services as an automatic voter registration agency and requires the Department to register individuals to vote when they are released from confinement at a State correctional facility.

Automatic voter registration is an approach to registering eligible voters that increases voter participation by linking voter registration to interaction with State agencies. Marylanders are currently automatically registered to vote when they interact with State agencies like the Motor Vehicle Administration, the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange, local departments of social services, and the Mobility Certification Office in the Maryland Transit Administration. An individual can opt-out of automatic registration if the individual chooses.

Current law strips a person of the right to vote by cancelling their voter registration when they are convicted of a felony and sentenced to a term of imprisonment for that conviction. A person may re-register and vote once they finish their term of imprisonment, however, it is often the case that a person forgets to reinstate their voting privileges when the person is juggling the many responsibilities and things, they must complete in order to reintegrate into their communities. When the time comes to vote, the person finds they are not registered to vote and have missed crucial deadlines that would have allowed them to vote. House Bill 627 would create an easy and fast-tracked way to re-establish the franchise for that disenfranchised person.

As a State we should put effort behind expanding the franchise to those rehabilitated by the criminal justice system. For the foregoing reasons, the Office of the Attorney General urges a favorable report on House Bill 627.

cc: Committee Members