



**Testimony in Support of House Bill 627:
An Act Concerning Automatic Voter Registration – State Correctional Facilities**

February 13, 2024

Good afternoon, Honorable Chair Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Vice Chair Jheanelle K. Wilkins, and Esteemed Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Isabelle C. Muhlbauer, and I am the Voting Rights Advocacy Manager at LatinoJustice PRLDEF. LatinoJustice PRLDEF uses and challenges laws to create a more just and equitable society. We transform harmful systems, empower our communities, fight for racial justice, and grow the next generation of líderes. I am here to testify in strong support of House Bill 627, which amends Maryland's Election Law to enable automatic voter registration for individuals released from state correctional facilities.

This landmark bill recognizes the fundamental right of every citizen to participate in our democracy. Automatic voter registration simplifies the registration process, effectively removing a critical obstacle to voting for voters who might otherwise be disenfranchised by complex registration procedures or unaware of their rights restoration. By designating the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services as an automatic voter registration agency, H.B. 627 ensures that returning citizens are given an equitable and meaningful opportunity to engage in democracy.

The bill represents a transformative approach to re-enfranchising returning citizens, a group that has historically faced significant barriers to voting post-incarceration. By automating voter registration, H.B. 627 not only facilitates a critical aspect of civic re-engagement but also addresses broader issues of disenfranchisement and inequality in the electoral system.



LatinoJustice has a long history and sustained commitment to making voting more accessible, especially to communities with a history of disenfranchisement. We enthusiastically support H.B. 627 as a powerful tool for increasing electoral participation among marginalized communities, including Latino and other minority populations. It eliminates unnecessary hurdles to registration, paving the way for a more inclusive democracy where every voice can be heard.

Uninhibited access to the ballot is at the core of a representative democracy. As such, we must continue to ensure that all voters, including historically marginalized communities, are able to freely have their voices heard through their vote. LatinoJustice calls on the Maryland legislature to pass H.B. 627, which strengthens the fabric of Maryland's democracy and serves as a model for other states to follow in expanding voting rights and access for returning citizens.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Isabelle C. Muhlbauer
Voting Rights Advocacy Manager