



P.O. Box 278
Riverdale, MD 20738

Committee: Judiciary
Testimony on: HB 1022 Election Law – Incarcerated Individuals – Voting Eligibility and Access (Voting Rights for All Act)
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: March 7, 2024

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club urges a favorable report on HB 1022. The bill will give individuals convicted of a felony (except those convicted of buying or selling votes) the right to vote while they are incarcerated.

The Sierra Club and its members advocate on behalf of both the natural and human environments, including promoting racial and social equity. As a grassroots organization, we believe that all Maryland citizens of voting age should be allowed to register and vote. Although individuals incarcerated after conviction for a felony are necessarily subject to some restrictions, they are still human beings whose lives are impacted by government, so we believe they should be allowed to vote in election of public officials.

In 2015 the General Assembly passed legislation¹ allowing individuals convicted for a felony (except those convicted of buying or selling votes) to be eligible to vote in Maryland as soon as their incarceration ends. Individuals incarcerated for a felony are currently allowed to vote in D.C., Maine, and Vermont, and this bill will give them (except those convicted of buying or selling votes) that right in Maryland.

The bill also requires secure election drop boxes in all state corrections facilities and creates an Ombudsman position to oversee and advocate for voting access of incarcerated individuals.

We believe our democracy is strongest when everyone is allowed to participate in governmental decisions that affect their lives.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on HB 1022.

Rich Norling
Chair, Voting Rights Committee
Rich.Norling@MDSierra.org

Josh Tulkin
Chapter Director
Josh.Tulkin@MDSierra.org

¹ [HB 980 of 2015](#) became law after the General Assembly overrode the Governor's veto early in the 2016 session.