



## **TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE**

### **HB 627 Election Law – Automatic Voter Registration – State Correctional Facilities**

#### **POSITION – Support**

**BY: LINDA KOHN**

**DATE: February 13, 2024**

The League of Women Voters of Maryland believes our election system should be representative, feasible to implement, and increase voter participation. We have long supported Automatic Voter Registration. We also supported legislation that in 2016 restored voting rights to felons who have served their sentences and to non-felons who are currently incarcerated. However, further action is needed to guarantee that these citizens are fully enfranchised. The measures in HB 627 provide a means to this end.

Returning citizens should, logically and appropriately, be beneficiaries of automatic voter registration in Maryland. These individuals generally do not have convenient access to the necessary forms and instructions to register to vote or apply for a mail-in ballot, nor is it foremost on their minds when they are resuming their lives. The League has consistently supported both voter registration for eligible people and voter information in correctional facilities for many years.

However, volunteer efforts to register and inform these citizens can only go so far. HB 627 requires correctional facilities to carry out the same activities as other state agencies such as the Motor Vehicle Administration, the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange and local departments of social services, and transmit the relevant voter registration information for a returning Maryland citizen to the State Board of Elections in a timely manner.

Voting makes people feel they have a stake in their community. Helping eligible incarcerated and recently released Marylanders exercise their voting rights will show that their community has a stake in them, too.

**We urge a favorable report on HB 627.**