

Testimony by Claire Snyder-Hall
Executive director, Common Cause Delaware
June 21, 2023

Common Cause Delaware strongly supports SB180. We firmly believe that the right to vote is inalienable, and that includes people with felony convictions. In other words, people should never be denied the right to vote as punishment for a crime, period. Voting is a human right.

Having the right to vote is essential to being a full member of a democratic society. People who have done their time need to be reintegrated back into the community, and restoring their right to vote helps with that process. Why should they be permanently marginalized?

Restoring the right to vote for people with felony convictions also helps society in a concrete way because it has [been shown](#) to improve public safety and reduce recidivism.

There is currently a nationwide movement to restore voting rights to the [5.85 million Americans](#) with felony convictions. Delaware should join this movement.

Restoring the right to vote is an issue of basic fairness and human decency. It's also an issue of racial justice. While the Black population makes up only 22% of Delaware residents, 60% of people in DE prisons are Black. Not allowing people with felony convictions to vote clearly has a disproportionate impact on the Black community.

Delaware does not have a proud history when it comes to race. We were one of the few states to reject the 13th Amendment that abolished slavery. This bill is a crucial part of our reckoning with that painful history. By restoring the right to vote for people with felony convictions, we're ending the decades of de facto political exile for many Black Delawareans.

Finally, this bill would eliminate the offensive Jim Crow language that still exists in our constitution – like the literacy test requirement. While that is currently not legal in the US, it's an abomination that our state Constitution continues to include it.

Thank you,

Claire Snyder-Hall
Common Cause Delaware