



**THE
SENTENCING
PROJECT**

RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY FOR REFORM

The Honorable Jerrold Nadler
Committee on the Judiciary
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Doug Collins
Committee on the Judiciary
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

January 28, 2019

RE: Support Voting Rights for People after Incarceration

Dear Chairman Nadler and Ranking Member Collins:

[Research](#) conducted by The Sentencing Project finds that the collateral consequences of incarceration include millions of Americans prohibited from voting, some permanently, because of a felony record. As the House Judiciary Committee prepares to hear testimony tomorrow regarding H.R. 1, the For the People Act of 2019, I hope you will give significant consideration to the bill's provision known as the Democracy Restoration Act. States across the country are reforming their felony disenfranchisement laws, and it is time for Congress to follow their lead by granting people released from prison an opportunity to vote in federal elections.

A report published by The Sentencing Project in October, 2018 - [Expanding the Vote: Two Decades of State Felony Disenfranchisement Reform](#) - found 23 states had restored voting rights to 1.4 million people since 1997. (Florida voters' approval of a November ballot initiative ending lifetime disenfranchisement for 1.4 million people in that state brings the total number of people benefitting from reform to 2.8 million as of today.) State changes have come about through various mechanisms, including legislative reform, executive action and ballot initiatives. Reforms highlighted in the report include:

- Alabama scaled back the number of crimes subject to disenfranchisement, impacting 76,000 people.
- California restored voting rights to certain categories of people on community supervision and to those with felony convictions incarcerated in jail, impacting 95,000 people.
- Maryland expanded voting rights to individuals on probation and parole, impacting 40,000 people.

While these policy changes represent national momentum for reform of felony disenfranchisement laws, too many states still prohibit voting by people who are not incarcerated but living in the community either on probation, parole or after completing their sentence. As thoughtful leaders supportive of criminal justice reform, I hope you agree that extending a second chance at civic engagement will help to build stronger communities and responsible citizens.

The Sentencing Project looks forward to working with House Judiciary Committee members as you explore ways to improve the country's electoral system and reexamine the consequences of felony disenfranchisement policies. I urge you to prioritize passage of the Democracy Restoration Act.

For questions, please contact Kara Gotsch, Director of Strategic Initiatives for The Sentencing Project, at kgotsch@sentencingproject.org or 202-628-0871.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marc Mauer". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Marc Mauer
Executive Director

Cc: House Judiciary Committee Members