



January 13, 2016

*By E-Mail*

Michael Busch  
Speaker of House of Delegates  
State House, H-101  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear House Speaker Busch:

On behalf of Project Vote, I am writing to thank you for your leadership and asking you to override the veto of SB340/HB980 (Election Law – Voting Rights – Ex-Felons). The passage of this bill over Governor Hogan's veto is a high priority for our organization. Project Vote is a national nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that promotes voting in historically underrepresented communities and advocates to ensure that our constituencies can register, vote, and cast ballots that count. Project Vote was pleased to see the passage of this legislation last spring, and deeply disappointed with Governor Hogan's decision to veto the bill.

This is critical legislation to restore voting rights for Marylanders with felony convictions upon release, before completing the terms of parole or probation. In Maryland, an estimated 40,000 former felons are out of prison, but deprived the right to vote under current law. Given the racial disparities in our criminal justice system, the current law has a disproportionate, unjust, and unacceptable impact on people of color. It is crucial to integrate into our society those who have completed prison sentences, not to disenfranchise and isolate them. These citizens live and work in our communities and deserve a voice in our political process.

The veto has already delayed voting rights restoration for these ex-offenders. Swift action is needed to guarantee voting rights to those on parole or probation, particularly with upcoming elections this year. We are grateful for your work passing SB340/HB980, and urge you to send a clear message that the people of Maryland stand for securing and expanding voting rights. Project Vote stands behind you. Please contact me if there is any way we can further support your efforts to override the veto.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael Slater".

Michael Slater  
President