

My testimony is in support of people incarcerated and people with felony convictions being able to vote. Being incarcerated does not mean someone should be denied their civic duty. They are affected by the laws and elected officials in office. If their life is impacted by who is in office, they should be able to have their voice heard.

Majority of people incarcerated will be released. Meaning, they will return to society and are expected to contribute back into their community. One of the easiest and most important ways to do that is by voting. It is all of our civic duty. We should not have the power to strip that duty away from someone based on their residential address or criminal history status.

Not allowing people with a felony conviction to vote is a complete contradiction to the expectations placed on them. For example, we want people to be rehabilitated and not commit crimes. Yet, we don't want people to feel included and a part of society by disallowing them to participate in the same activities as their neighbor. It is very easy to receive a felony conviction and I don't think the ramifications should be so severe. A felony is already a punitive sanction and reaps collateral consequences like limited housing, eligibility for SNAP benefits, and limited employment opportunities.

Similarly, this disenfranchisement is a way of control by the top one percent, a rigged political strategy, and disservice to communities of color. As of 2020, the sentencing project estimates 5.2 million people are unable to vote because of a felony. One in sixteen African Americans are disenfranchised from voting. That is 3.7 times higher compared to Caucasians. We are supporting racism if we continue to uphold laws that are perpetuated and founded in racism. Voting disenfranchisement is one of them.

For the above reasons, I support giving people with felony convictions and incarcerated people the right to vote.