Testimony of Kelsey Hust
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In Favor of SB 233, AN ACT CONCERNING ELECTIONS

Chairperson Flexer, Chairperson Fox, and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee; my name is Kelsey Hust and I am here to testify in favor of SB 233, an Act Concerning Elections. As a soon-to-be Social Worker and community organizer, this topic is a social justice matter that is sure to affect people I will be working with during my career and/or people in their communities. As social workers, we are taught to be advocates and social justice fighters. Social and Political Action is an ethical responsibility embedded into our code of ethics. I am here to live up to my code of ethics and open up voting rights to convicted felons who are on parole without the payment of certain fines.

Voting rights have been fought for by multiple groups over time, groups who have already faced and biases and here we find ourselves still fighting for a group that continues to face oppression and biases. Not providing voting rights to those who are on parole due to unpaid fines is a form of continuing punishment after someone has been released. I think it is important to take into account the hardship someone may face with lack of access to income after release from prison. The cause of not being able to bring in income to pay fines are not related to their current efforts but because of something that is part of their past. By not allowing convicted felons owing fines to vote, we are allowing the oppressive systems to continue to push people down who are already down. By not allowing voting rights to be reinstated for these people affected, we continue to believe that people can pull themselves up by their bootstraps without equity.

We are all human, we have all made mistakes, but I asking that we put a stop to the continuation of punishment when people have done what they need to do to be where they are and to create a better life beyond what has happened in their past. We continue to expect people to jump over unnecessary hurdles. We expect people to continue to prove themselves. We trust people on parole enough to allow them out into the community but not enough to have a say in their community and those who oversee their community, state, and country. I am asking that you vote in favor of SB 233, thank you.