Our Voice Matters
Support ACA 6: Restore Voting Rights to Californians on Parole

We, the undersigned signatories, strongly urge the California State Legislature to stand on the right side of history and eliminate a major, unnecessary, and discriminatory barrier to full participation in our democracy: the denial of the right to vote while on parole.

We urge you to support the passage of ACA 6, a bill that will give California voters the opportunity to automatically restore voting rights to people immediately upon their release from prison. Fourteen states and the District of Columbia have already adopted similar policies. But here, in California—a state known for its supposedly progressive, inclusive, and forward-thinking approach to democracy—voting rights are denied to people released from prison, often for many years, simply because they are parolees. Although state and federal legislatures, city councils, and boards of education routinely make decisions that directly impact the lives of people on parole and their loved ones, voting rights are denied to this vulnerable population, as though their voices and lives don't matter. People convicted of similar offenses, but who are on probation rather than parole, do not face the same voting restrictions and exclusions.

Felony disenfranchisement has a long, sordid, and discriminatory history in the United States. California is no exception. It is no secret that racial bias has infected policing, prosecution, and sentencing here in this state and that centuries of oppression and unequal opportunities have contributed to disparate incarceration rates in California and beyond. African Americans comprise only 6% of this state's adult population, yet comprise 26% of the parole population. By contrast, white Californians comprise 44% of the adult population and comprise 26% of the parole population. While we fully believe that people of all races deserve the right to vote, we are especially cognizant of the discriminatory impact of felony disenfranchisement laws, including California's policy of denying voting rights to people as they strive to rebuild their lives following release from prison. We ought to be doing everything we possibly can to encourage people to vote and to support their efforts to contribute to their communities following release from prison, rather than barring them from the ballot and denying them an opportunity, individually and collectively, to improve their life chances and the well-being of their families, loved ones, and communities.

We ask the entire legislature to embrace this issue regardless of party affiliation. Voting is central to any democracy. If we do not extend the right to vote to all people, then we cannot call ourselves a truly equitable and inclusive democracy.

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A New Way of Life / All of Us or None – Los Angeles
Tina Vergas-Edmond
Social Justice
Tamika Walker
Stop Brown Bags
Tahjae Barrows
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Life After Crime

All of Us or None is a grassroots organization of Legal Services for Prisoners with Children – www.prisonerswithchildren.org

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All of Us or None supports people who are incarcerated fully and collectively, inside and outside the prison system.

Delmarva Review, Strawberry Mansion on parole, the Struggle for Justice Community Conference, weekend of June 29th, 2019

City of Los Angeles, City Hall, 200 N. Spring Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012

All of Us or None is a California State Senator – 9th District

Rodney Melamendi, Drug Policy Alliance (DPA)

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Monday January 20, 2020

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