

November 24, 2020

ATTORNEY GENERAL RAOUL OPPOSES MINNESOTA'S VOTING RESTRICTIONS ON RETURNING CITIZENS LIVING IN THE COMMUNITY

Chicago — Attorney General Kwame Raoul today joined a coalition of 15 attorneys general in voicing opposition to a Minnesota law that prevents returning citizens from voting until they have completed their terms of parole, probation, or supervised release.

In an amicus brief filed in *Schroeder v. Simon* before the Minnesota Court of Appeals, Raoul and the coalition argue that allowing returning citizens to vote strengthens their ties to their community, decreasing the likelihood of recidivism. Further, they argue that the law disproportionately harms the state's Black, Latino and Native American communities.

"Voting is a right, not a privilege, and denying that right to individuals on parole, probation, or supervised release discourages rehabilitation and disproportionately harms minority communities," Raoul said. "These individuals deserve a second chance, which includes having the right to participate in our nation's democracy."

Felon disenfranchisement in the United States is the product of a patchwork of state laws, which vary widely. Efforts to expand the right to vote embrace the notion that allowing returning citizens to vote benefits both the individuals and the communities they rejoin. However, an estimated 5.2 million people across the United States were barred from casting a ballot in this year's election because of felony convictions. Of those, roughly 3.9 million are no longer incarcerated.

In today's amicus brief, Raoul and the coalition support the plaintiffs' challenge to the Minnesota felon disenfranchisement law because:

- **Expanding voting to returning citizens promotes successful reintegration and enhances public safety.** Over the past 25 years, states have restored the right to vote to more than one million citizens by reforming their felon disenfranchisement laws. These reform efforts include laws repealing lifetime disenfranchisement, allowing people convicted of felonies to vote while completing the terms of their probation, parole, or supervised release, eliminating requirements to pay legal financial obligations, and providing information to felons leaving correctional facilities about restoration of their voting rights and registering to vote.
- **Felon disenfranchisement disproportionately harms Black, Latino, and Native American communities.** States have recognized the importance of restoring voting rights to returning citizens given the disparate impact of felon disenfranchisement laws on minority communities. Mass incarceration has resulted in voting rights disparities for people of color.

Joining Raoul in the amicus brief are the attorneys general of California, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia and Washington.