

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 740
Correctional Services - Restrictive Housing - Direct Release**

**House Judiciary Committee
February 25, 2020**

The Maryland chapter of the National Association of Social Workers supports House Bill 740. NASW-MD represents thousands of the social workers in Maryland who have dedicated their careers to assisting some of the most vulnerable Marylanders. Our members work in corrections, social services, education, state and local government, private practice, aging, housing, employment and more. We see every day the links between trauma, poverty, racism, and incarceration. It is our duty to combat these forces and work for a more equitable future. This bill will be a step towards that future.

HB 740 is an important bill prohibiting a state facility from directly releasing an inmate who has been placed in restrictive housing from a facility to the community without providing the inmate a certain transitional process and more than 180 days before release.

It is clear to social workers across the state that both the isolation and the conditions of solitary confinement are traumatic. Using isolation as a punitive tool does not assist anyone with reentry and behavior change. Beyond the trauma of solitary confinement, human connection and healthy relationships are key to mental health and social functioning. Isolating individuals does not improve their ability to relate positively to others and indeed is a significant detriment to those skills. Through the practice of solitary confinement, we are making it more difficult for individuals to successfully reenter society.

Any stark change in environment is challenging and being released from incarceration is no different. Adjustment takes time and support even when individuals were not in solitary confinement. Going from near complete isolation to life outside of a correctional facility is even more so. This practice is endangering that individual, those around them, and society at large.

NASW- Maryland calls on lawmakers to pass this critical piece of legislation immediately. Please vote YES on HB 740.