



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry
Shared Voices for Liberal Values in Maryland

SUPPORT HB 740

RESTRICTIVE HOUSING – Direct Release Criminal justice
House Judiciary Committee
February 24,2020

Dear Chairman Clippinger, Vice – Chair Atterbeary, and House
Judiciary members,

I am Karen Clark - Criminal Justice Task Force Chair of the Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of MD. In 2016 the first required annual report from the Correctional Services – Restrictive Housing (previously known as Solitary) was released. It was alarming to learn from a national study (Vera Institute) that while most of the nation had an average of about 4% of their prison population in Restrictive Housing at any one time, Maryland has an alarming 8%. This fact and others like the currently released data showing that Maryland's has the NATION'S largest racial discrepancy in its population. Md has a 30.1% African American population but 70% of its prisoners are African American! Another item of concern is the number of people who are released directly from Solitary or Restrictive Housing to the outside world without any transitional support to prepare them for this change. In 2018, it was up by 9 from the previous year to 287 people directly released from solitary to the outside. This is inhumane treatment for the returning citizen and a safety threat to those who will interact with the returning citizen. This bill requires a more humane approach to this situation that honors the inherent worth and dignity of the returning citizen, one that aligns with our faith's values. HB 740 calls for an exit plan out of solitary and another one for transitional services. If the person is deemed a threat to others or a flight risk that person may be held in Restrictive Housing. These types of changes traumatize most people and so the Unitarian Universalist

crime” and vote in favor of HB 740.