



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

**February 25, 2020**

**HB 740  
Correctional Services - Restrictive Housing – Direct Release**

**House Judiciary**

**Position: Support**

The Maryland Catholic Conference (“Conference”) represents the public policy interests of the three Roman Catholic (arch)dioceses serving Maryland: the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Archdiocese of Washington, and the Diocese of Wilmington.

House Bill 740 prohibits a correctional facility from releasing an inmate who has been placed in restrictive housing from the facility directly back into the community more than 180 days prior to release and without providing a transition process. It further prohibits an inmate from being placed in restrictive housing within 180 days of the inmate’s release date.

The Church upholds that systems of criminal justice should seek both justice and mercy, with an emphasis upon restoration of communities, victims and offenders as a whole. Restrictive housing is a means toward none of these ends and is a regressive policy. It is thus important that the State of Maryland, at the very least, seriously limit its usage. Regardless of their offense, prisoners are exposed to the perils of incarceration for the crimes they’ve committed. Solitary confinement only compiles these perils and limits their hope for rehabilitation.

It is further imperative that all men and women have appropriate access to prerelease services to be able to successfully reenter their communities. Factors such as family reintegration, job or vocational training, and affordable housing are crucial to a person’s productive return, replacing the isolation of confinement with more positive supports. The combination of such factors ultimately leads to lower recidivism rates and better involvement in a person’s family and community life.

Lack of transition services tailored to facilitate reentry is an injustice to the future success of inmates in Maryland to have productive futures once they are released.

The Conference appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 740.