

SUPPORT HB 742 - Restrictive Housing Act and HB 740 - Restrictive Housing - Direct Release

MARYLAND ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE REFORM
Working to end unnecessary incarceration and build strong, safe communities



To: Chair Luke Clippinger & House Judiciary Com.
From: Phil Caroom
MAJR Executive Com.
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Md. Alliance for Justice Reform ([MAJR-www.ma4jr.org](http://www.ma4jr.org)) strongly supports HB 740 and 742 to assist Maryland prisons in reducing their [twice-the-national average overuse of solitary confinement \(known here as “restrictive housing.”\)](#)

HB 740 limits use of restrictive housing within the last 6 months’ incarceration to inmates found by administrators to pose an “immediate threat,” those request protection, to show a risk for escape, etc. Others still incarcerated at the six month point would be granted transitional mental health counseling and other services to assist their return to the community.

Why is direct release a problem? One [study](#) in Washington state showing that [inmates released directly from the Supermax prison, which consists entirely of solitary confinement, committed new felonies at a rate 35 percent greater than that for inmates of the same risk profile released from the general population.](#)

HB 742 bars use of restrictive housing for inmates with serious mental illness, unless for exigent circumstances or medical purposes with approved supervision.

Why is this needed? David H. Cloud, head of the Vera Institute of Justice’s Reform for Healthy Communities Initiative, has stated: [“Nearly every scientific inquiry into the effects of solitary confinement over the past 150 years has concluded that subjecting an individual to more than 10 days of involuntary segregation results in a distinct set of emotional, cognitive, social, and physical pathologies.”](#) This increase in mental illness in turn results in crime and other community problems.

[HB 740 and HB 742 will help Maryland reduce its twice-national average overuse of solitary confinement — and improve mental health & public safety results from incarceration.](#) Please give a favorable report to HB 740 & 742.

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Please note: Phil Caroom provides this testimony for MAJR and not for the Md. Judiciary.