



**Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry  
Shared Voices for Liberal Values in Maryland**

**SUPPORT 742**

SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS- ASSESSMENTS  
House Judiciary Committee  
February 24,2020

Good afternoon Del. Clippinger, Vice-Chair Atterbeary and Judiciary Committee members,

I am Karen Clark, speaking on behalf of the Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry. Our faith calls us to support legislation that aligns with our spiritual values. This bill involves the use of compassion, equity and justice, which our second principle reminds us to employ in our relationships and involvement with the world at large.

As we all know, Maryland's state prisons have become our unofficial State Mental Institutions without professional design, planning or structure. Although maybe it was unintentional at first, it's now falling on the Correctional Department to address this issue. Horrific stories, about the conditions, treatment and time people, especially those with mental illness have been heard in this hearing room over the years. This bill makes some recommendations to treat the seriously mentally ill in a more compassionate manner by offering to teach them de-escalation techniques and that they only be placed in solitary when all other options have been explored. If placed in solitary it must be kept to the recommended time limit, under specified supervision and this hopefully will avoid or lesson further traumatization.

In lieu of the lack of a professional independent MD Mental Health Care System, the Unitarian Universalist Ministry asks you to vote in favor of HB742 which begins to require specific more humane and accountability procedures for the treatment of the seriously mentally ill from our communities.

Karen Clark – Criminal Justice Task Force