

## MARYLAND PRISONERS' RIGHTS COALITION

TESTIMONY – SUPPORT  
Corrections – Restrictive Housing – Serious Mental Illness

### TESTIMONY OF AN IMPACTED FAMILY MEMBER: Lisa Burn, wife of Gary Burn, located at Roxbury Correctional Facility

Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Attebeary, and Committee Members

I THANK Delegate Ruth for bring up this bill and ask this committee to please **SUPPORT** HB0851.

My Husband Gary Burns has been incarcerated in the Maryland Department of Corrections Roxbury Facility for the past 5 years. He has what is classified as a serious mental illness. He has been official diagnosed with Bipolar/ schizophrenia and has to be on medication. He is incarcerated at the Roxbury Correctional Facility. Over the years I have found that the staff has limited to no knowledge on how to deal with inmates that have mental health issues and they add to the problem instead of mitigating the problem.

Very often when my husband does not receive his medication, he goes into manic episodes and rather than the correctional staff apply the correct measure to assist him, by getting sending him to the infirmary or to a clinician they instead punish him by sending him to lock up or into a more restrictive situation, like solitary – which hurts rather than helps the situation. The use of restrictive house to deter behaviors that are a direct result of mental illness is oscinine in the least and extremely harmful. My husband's conditions have been both exacerbated by untrained and unempathetic responses to mental illness and this makes no sense. The system has chosen to house people like my husband rather than send them mental health facilities, so it must be responsible for the appropriate care and reaction to their illness.

Solitary is not the place to put someone experiencing distress because of their mental illness, especially where the system has a historical record of these illnesses. I therefore am fully supportive of this bill to assist the Department of Labor in taking steps to ensure our loved ones are safe and the appropriate actions are taken when it comes to individuals with mental illness.

Again, I ask the committee to submit a favorable report on SB0851. Thank you for your consideration.