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Judicial Proceedings Committee

Joint Committee on
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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 30, 2022

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
**SB 977 – Favorable – Correctional Services – Restrictive Housing –
Direct Release**

Senate Bill 977 is the codification of best practices for the preparation of returning citizens when reentry may pose a public safety risk. This is not only a human rights bill, it is public safety legislation.

Studies have shown that restrictive housing is linked to many negative psychological and physical behavioral problems, including anxiety, depression, ruminations, irritability, anger, paranoia, disturbed sleep, disturbed appetite, cognitive impairments, social withdrawal, cardiovascular disease, impaired vision, self-harm, and suicide. While Maryland's Division of Correction proclaims that it has, "A commitment to returning offenders to society with the tools necessary to keep them from their former life of crime is evident in the vast array of job skill opportunities, educational programming, psychological and health sessions, and drug treatment." Policy is more effective here than words.

In Colorado, no one is released directly from solitary into the community. Rather, Colorado implemented a graduated step-down program to prepare people for their return home. In comparison, from 2016 to 2018, Maryland released 834 people directly from isolation in Maryland correctional facilities after spending an average of 60 days in restrictive housing. This Maryland practice endangers community members who may be foreseeably be victimized by these individuals who have not had a chance to step down. Marylanders are put at more risk than Colorado citizens due to this policy.

This bill simply allows returning citizens with 180 days left until release the opportunity to work with a reentry specialist or case manager. These specialized individuals assist in the transition from restrictive housing to living among the community. In 2019, [the amended provision](#) in this legislation, as we will strike most of the bill, was passed out of this committee but stalled in the last days of the session.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on SB 977, as amended for conformity with [HB 67 third reader](#).