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Patrick Moran - President

Testimony
HB 1299 – Corrections – Housing – Serious Mental Illness
Judiciary Committee
March 8, 2022

INFORMATION ONLY

AFSCME Council 3 represents 30,000 state and higher education employees, including those who work at our DPSCS and MDH facilities. HB 1299 requires the Department of Corrections to provide an inmate with a diagnosed serious mental illness (SMI) with 2.5 hours of time outside their locked cell or room each day.

The Maryland Department of Health operates seven (7) facilities statewide that care for individuals who have been court-ordered for evaluation and treatment after having committed a crime and being declared to be a danger to themselves and others. As this is a very similar population to the inmates HB 1299 is attempting to help, it's important to note that state hospitals already restrict the use of seclusion on individuals who have serious mental illness. If this same population were in a state hospital, the use of seclusion may only be used upon signoff from a clinician and only in situations where a patient's behavior is an imminent threat to the safety of themselves or others, and after less restrictive interventions have failed. This is very different from Corrections, where seclusion in a locked room or cell is the main point.

AFSCME Council 3 feels this population would be better served in state hospitals, surrounded by nursing and clinical staff who have the ability to medicate and treat this population – and who are already doing a wonderful job helping this population return safely back into our communities.

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An employee has the right to a union representative if requested by the employee.
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