



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Testimony in Support of SB 459 - Correctional Services - Restrictive Housing - Limitations (Maryland Mandela Act)

TO: Senator Will Smith, Jr. Chair and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Karen "Candy" Clark,
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland Criminal Justice Lead
DATE: March 8, 2023

The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry asks for a favorable vote on SB 459 - Correctional Services - Restrictive Housing - Limitations (Maryland Mandela Act). This bill exemplifies our first principle; to honor the worth and dignity of all persons. Restrictive housing has had a long history of excessive use of inhumane oppressive policies and treatments that severely impair an individual's mental and physical health. This comprehensive bill could serve as a manual that might be entitled, "A Humane and Effective Treatment for Restrictive Housing."

This bill includes special training (at least 40 hours with scheduled updates) by all personnel involved in the supervision and care of those placed in restrictive housing. This includes criteria for who can and can not be placed in restrictive housing based on classifications of the mental state of the individual, like "schizophrenic disorders." Weekly assessments by a mental and a physical professional including a management supervisor. The incarcerated person may not serve more than three consecutive days in confinement unless they commit one the seven identified offenses, like "sexual assault." HB 385 supports the UN Statute of Torture stating that if Restrictive Housing encompasses more than fifteen consecutive days it classifies as TORTURE. This action is limited by this bill to a maximum of four occurrences a year per individual.

Three years ago, Connecticut Dept. of Corrections was evaluated on its use of Restrictive Housing by a UN Special Rapporteur on torture who reported: The Connecticut Department of Corrections (DOC) has appeared to routinely repress inmates through prolonged or indefinite isolation, excessive use of in-cell restraints and "needlessly intrusive strip searches," the expert said. If a UN Special Rapporteur came here today, how would Maryland rate?

Let's support a culture where the "inherent worth and dignity of all" is the norm not the exception.

Vote yes for SB 459.

Thank you for your service in this noble work.

Respectfully submitted,

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