



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MARYLAND

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 0459:

Correctional Services - Restrictive Housing - Limitations (Maryland Mandela Act)

****FAVORABLE****

TO: Sen. William C. Smith, Jr., Chair, Sen. Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair and the members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Rev. Kenneth O. Phelps, Jr., Co-Chair, Maryland Episcopal Public Policy Network, Diocese of Maryland

DATE: March 8, 2023

The Episcopal Church, at its 78th Convention in 2015, passed sweeping resolutions aimed at ending mass incarceration practices and mitigating solutions for the damages inflicted upon certain communities by both arrest and sentencing policies and practices, and called for sweeping reforms in the practice of restrictive housing.

Numerous studies show that restrictive housing hurts prisoners, families and communities.

First and foremost, prisoners suffer. Prisoners in restrictive housing have suffered physical and psychological harms, such as psychosis, trauma, severe depression, serious self-injury, or suicide.

Their families suffer. When a prisoner is in restrictive housing, s/he has limited visits and calls from family—this not only punishes families it breaks down the family ties that are crucial to re-entry.

And their communities suffer. Many prisoners are released directly from restrictive housing into the community—this is not safe. During restrictive housing, prisoners often have limited opportunity to seek support from faith leaders and other sources of support, which may be instrumental in supporting the inmate during confinement, but also for safe re-entry upon release.

The Diocese of Maryland requests a favorable report.