

SB 459_Jo Shifrin_FAV
Date of Hearing March 8, 2023
Jo Shifrin
Bethesda, Maryland 20817

TESTIMONY ON SB 459 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
Correctional Services - Restrictive Housing Limitations

TO: Senator Smith, Chair, and Senator Waldstreicher, Vice Chair, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Jo Shifrin

My name is Jo Shifrin. I am a resident of District 16. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB 459.

As a Jew, I believe in *tikkun olam*, repairing the world. I believe in the dignity of every human being, I believe in practicing charity and acts of human kindness, and I believe in pursuing justice in a just way.

Solitary confinement, or restrictive housing as it is known in Maryland, is a form of torture, in my view and in the view of many mental health professionals. It is detrimental to both physical and mental health. Many incarcerated people have spent weeks at a time locked in a cell the size of a parking space for 22 or more hours out of each 24 hour day. Moreover, this punishment is used disproportionately on the poor and people of color. The harm we do to these people is unconscionable.

This bill is a first step in limiting –and I hope one day– abolishing the use of solitary confinement. It limits the basis for restrictive housing and limits the number of consecutive days someone may be held. It also provides for due process for those in prison and accountability for the prison system. It is a big improvement on what has been the traditional use of restrictive housing, and for that reason, **I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB 459.**