



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

March 8th, 2023

SB 459

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

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Position: Favorable

The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Senate Bill 459 requires hearing officers and personnel involved with the supervision and care of individuals placed in restrictive housing to undergo at least 40 hours of training; establishing guidelines and procedures for the placement of incarcerated individuals in certain types of restrictive housing or disciplinary segregation; and requiring each correctional facility to create a monthly report containing certain information about individuals placed in restrictive housing and to publish the report on the facility's website.

Pope Francis has equated punishment involving external isolation to a form of "torture." He denoted that states should not be "*allowed, juridical or in fact, to subordinate respect for the dignity of the human person to any other purpose, even should it serve some sort of social utility.*" (*Address of Pope Francis to the Delegates of the International Association of Penal Law, October 2014*)

The Church upholds that systems of criminal justice should seek both justice and mercy, with an emphasis upon restoration of communities, victims and offenders. Restrictive housing is a means toward none of these ends and is a regressive policy. It is thus important that the State of Maryland, at the very least, seriously limit its usage. Regardless of their offense, prisoners are exposed to the perils of incarceration for the crimes they've committed. Solitary confinement only compiles these perils and limits their hope for rehabilitation. Simply the relative isolation of confinement is enough to aggravate existing mental health issues.

The Conference appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a **favorable** report on SB 459.

