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March 7, 2023

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 0459— Correctional Services - Restrictive Housing - Limitations (Maryland Mandela Act) Position: SUPPORT

Annapolis Pride's mission is to advocate for, empower, and celebrate our LGBTQ+ community in Anne Arundel County to live fully and authentically. Our vision is a safe, equitable, and anti-racist community where people of all identities thrive.

As such, the Board of Directors of Annapolis Pride enthusiastically supports Senate Bill 0459. This bill expands and updates non-discrimination policies in Maryland's correctional facilities, to include sexual orientation and gender identity and requires relevant authorities to engage in training to provide more trauma-informed care for those who are incarcerated and placed in restrictive housing.

People who identify as LGBTQ+ are over-represented in the prison population and are at high risk for sexual abuse and harassment while incarcerated. In some instances, LGBTQ+ individuals have been placed in restrictive housing solely because of their identity for the stated purpose of protecting them from the threat of the general population. However, restrictive housing can further isolate and traumatize these individuals, especially when they are isolated for an extended period of time. If they are denied access to exercise and other services or activities within the prison because of their restrictive housing, their rights are unfairly limited because of their identity or orientation.

In requiring officials to receive training on trauma-informed care and delineating the guidelines and procedures for placing detainees in restrictive housing to exclude gender identity and sexual orientation as the sole basis for placing someone in restrictive housing, this legislation is important to the community which we represent.

For these reasons, Annapolis Pride respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 0459.