

TESTIMONY ON SB1085
Segregated Housing - Limitations

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
March 6, 2024

SUPPORT

Submitted by: **Magdalena Tsiongas, MPH**

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

I, Magdalena Tsiongas, am testifying in support of SB1085, Segregated Housing - Limitations. I am submitting this testimony as the family member of an incarcerated person in a Maryland prison.

So often, segregated housing is used as a catch-all in Maryland prisons. People who are going through acute mental health crisis are put alone in cells, people who are being punished for an infraction are put alone in cells, people who feel unsafe around others are put alone in cells. In 2022, 370 people with serious mental illness were placed in restrictive housing in Maryland.

I recently spoke with the mother of a man who spent 60 days on punitive segregation, which means for 60 days, he wasn't able to speak to call or visit with his children. And many more people spend far longer than 60 days in segregation.

This is not an isolation issue. According to the 2022 report of the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, 25.8% of incarcerated individuals were in restrictive housing (solitary) at least once the prior year. The average length of stay in restrictive housing (solitary) was 42.5 days.

International standards, including the United Nations, classify solitary confinement beyond 15 DAYS torture. Make no mistake, therefore, that Maryland is torturing people in prisons by keeping them alone in cells, deprived of human contact, for sometimes years at a time.

I urge you for a **favorable report** on SB1085, with an amendment for the bill to include county jails as well as state prisons.

Thank you.