



Testimony in SUPPORT of *House Bill 1144 – Corrections – Segregated Housing – Limitations*
Judiciary Committee
March 7, 2024

The Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington (JCRC) serves as the public affairs and community relations arm of the Jewish community. We represent over 100 Jewish organizations, synagogues, and social services agencies throughout Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The JCRC is strongly committed to cultivating a society based on freedom, justice, and pluralism. We work throughout the region to advocate for our agencies that serve the most vulnerable residents and to campaign for important policy interests on behalf of the Jewish community and all Marylanders. The JCRC is focused on promoting social justice and intergroup relations and combating antisemitism and all forms of hatred.

The JCRC's advocacy is grounded in core values of the Jewish faith: Justice, repentance, and the preservation of human life (Exodus 20:13). It is from this perspective that we support House Bill 1144. This Bill requires hearing officers and personnel involved with the supervision and care of individuals placed in restrictive housing to undergo training and to establish guidelines and procedures for the placement of incarcerated individuals in segregated housing. HB 1144 also requires that the handling of "administrative segregation" is revised such that effectively this approach may be used only for up to 3 days or on a modified basis (i.e., restricting an incarcerated person's housing to not more than 17 hours per day in an isolated cell).

Our agency believes that conditions of confinement must be humane and that certain conditions, including the overuse of solitary confinement, can impose dire consequences more egregious than the sentences themselves. We are extremely concerned about the devastating mental health effects of restricting housing/solitary confinement. The practice of keeping an individual in a one-person cell with no opportunities for meaningful human interaction causes long term harm to an incarcerated person's mental and physical health. Additionally, this practice does not only injure the incarcerated individual, but also our entire system of corrections. Upon release, individuals who have been harmed by the lack of adequate human interaction, are incapable of productive participation in society. For these reasons, the JCRC supports HB 1144 and asks for a favorable report.