

**TESTIMONY ON HB1144
Segregated Housing - Limitations**

**House Judiciary Committee
March 7, 2024**

SUPPORT

Submitted by: **Magdalena Tsiongas, MPH**

Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett and members of the Judiciary Committee:

I, Magdalena Tsiongas, am testifying in support of HB1144, 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 HB1144.

Thank you.