

Testimony Before the Judiciary Committee

March 7, 2024

House Bill 1144: Corrections - Segregated Housing – Limitations

**** Support ****

The National Association of Social Workers – Maryland Chapter is a professional organization representing over 3,000 social workers statewide. We are pleased to support of HB 1144. We are in support of altering a reporting requirement for correctional units relating to restrictive housing, making it a requirement for hearing officers and personnel involved with supervision and care of individuals placed in restrictive housing to undergo specialized training and establishing guidelines and procedures for the placement of incarcerated individual in certain types of segregated housing.

It is clear to social workers across the state that both the isolation and the conditions of solitary confinement are traumatic. Using isolation as a punitive tool does not assist anyone with reentry and behavior change. Beyond the trauma of solitary confinement, human connection and healthy relationships are key to mental health and social functioning. Isolating individuals does not improve their ability to relate positively to others and indeed is a significant detriment to those skills. Through the practice of solitary confinement, we are making it more difficult for individuals to successfully reenter society.

In conclusion, NASW-Maryland supports this bill because the widespread use of segregation and isolation needs to be reduced, and we must make sure that people with mental health issues receive the appropriate services. We urge a favorable report of HB 1144.

Respectfully,

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