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February 17, 2025

Maryland House of Delegates
Lowe House Office Building
Judiciary Committee
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: SB702/HB647 Restrictive Housing

Greetings Honorable Senators of the State of Maryland,

My name is Donald Bovello. I am a former juvenile lifer who served over 35 years of a life and 20 year sentence. During that time, I was housed in restrictive housing twice. I also worked jobs which brought me into frequent contact with these housing areas and persons subjected to months of time in restricted housing. Furthermore, I communicate with individuals who are incarcerated in general population, but the prison operates under restricted housing status.

During my time in disciplinary housing, I was in a barred front door and there were other persons on that unit. This did not help the lasting effect of being confined that way. I felt very alone and isolated. I went through mental and emotional roller coaster rides, feeling depressed, angry, helpless, but never happy or optimistic.

During my time in administrative segregation I felt hopeless, helpless, alone, isolated and very depressed. In administrative segregation, there is no known end. An end date is determined by prison officials. I was again in a small, barred front cell.

Any person who is housed in restricted housing is subjected to the whims of other individuals in restricted housing. Some of whom struggle with Mental Health challenges. It is not uncommon to be subjected to several hours of non-sensical screaming, yelling of profanities and threats, crying, smells of bodily waste and fluids and the lack of normal day-to-day human interaction.

While housed in any restricted housing, even contact with prison officials is limited to the staff who work directly on those units. Anyone who is assigned to work in these units is strongly encouraged to not speak to those housed in restrictive housing or to do anything for them, including notifying the unit officer that an individual housed in restrictive housing may need assistance. The stance of prison officials towards anyone housed in restrictive housing is apathetic.

When I was released from restrictive housing, it took months to return to my normal mental and emotional state.

All prisons have privileges. These privileges are intended to manage behavior. Unfortunately, they are not used appropriately to manage behavior. Shorter restrictive housing and implementation of loss of privileges would result in a change in behavior. The loss of privileges has an impact on individuals if appropriately applied. Loss of phone and/or visiting privileges brings pressure from family members

who desire to have contact with their loved one. Behavior is modified by demonstrating that there is more freedom when an individual behaves in accordance with rules. Restrictive housing only drives individuals to very dark places mentally and emotionally, for which they don't receive therapy. They may be prescribed a medication which may not modify behavior.

If corrections is to live up to it's name, correct, there needs to be an effort to actually correct the behavior. This is done through interaction by correctional staff, recognizing good behavior and being critical of negative behavior. This is done through communication and reinforcement of privileges and consequences.

Thank you for your time and consideration of SB SB702/HB647 and for your service to the Great State of Maryland.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donald J. Bovello". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Donald J. Bovello
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