

March 4, 2025

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

NAMI Maryland and our 11 local affiliates across the state represent a network of more than 58,000 families, individuals, community-based organizations, and service providers. NAMI Maryland is a 501(c)(3) non-profit dedicated to providing education, support, and advocacy for people living with mental illnesses, their families, and the wider community.

NAMI Maryland applauds the sponsors of this bill for addressing the critical issue of solitary confinement and restrictive housing, which disproportionately impacts juveniles and adults with severe psychiatric symptoms.

For individuals living with serious mental illness, solitary confinement is not an appropriate disciplinary measure, nor does it enhance safety or improve their ability to function in general prison settings. Instead, it causes extreme suffering, exacerbates psychiatric symptoms, disrupts treatment, and leads to long-term cognitive and adaptive impairments.

We strongly oppose the use of solitary confinement and restrictive housing for individuals with mental illness. Instead, we urge state and correctional authorities to implement evidence-based mental healthcare alternatives, including enhanced treatment programs, crisis intervention training for correctional officers, and specialized mental health step-down units. States that have taken proactive steps to eliminate solitary confinement have seen highly positive outcomes, including reduced psychiatric symptoms, decreased violence, and overall cost savings.

This bill represents a crucial step toward a more humane and effective correctional system. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report.

Kathryn S. Farinholt  
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