



HB 647
Correctional Services Restrictive Housing

MCAA Position: **OPPOSE**

TO: Judiciary

DATE: February 28, 2025

FROM: Ryan Ross, President
Lamonte Cooke, Legislative Committee
Mary Ann Thompson, Legislative Committee

The Maryland Correctional Administrator's Association (MCAA), an organization comprised of our statewide jail wardens and administrators for promoting and improving best correctional practices, appreciates the opportunity to provide information regarding HB 647.

Restrictive housing has long been recognized as a legitimate measure to ensure correctional institutions' orderly operation and safety. Correctional managers' primary duty and responsibility is to provide for the protection and welfare of incarcerated individuals and employees. The use of restrictive housing is essential to accomplishing that. If this bill were to become law, it would limit correctional managers' decision-making ability and cause them to be deliberately indifferent to certain risk factors. While most of the bill focuses on the State prison system, the bill language sets the local detention centers up for failure to comply with this bill as written:

- Due to facility design, allowing all incarcerated individuals out-of-cell equitably during non-lockdown hours is not possible to accomplish 7 hours per day out of cell. Wardens around the State recognize the benefit of out-of-cell time and go to great lengths to maximize the time out of the cell fairly and equitably.
- The incarcerated individuals entrusted to the care of a correctional facility are because of maladjusted and illegal behavior in the community, as well as those who are found to be incompetent and awaiting transfer to the mental hospital. Correctional facilities around the State have maximized alternatives to incarceration. So, those incarcerated are due to non-compliance with community corrections rules and regulations or due to their charge and criminal history held with no bond. The bill proposes to limit the correctional administrator's ability to manage a problematic incarcerated individual and protect all who are incarcerated from harm.
- All incarcerated individuals receive classification, medical, and behavioral health assessments at intake and weekly throughout incarceration. Incarcerated individuals are housed to protect the individual and those who are housed together, keep them from becoming prey and ensure the safety and security of all.
- The Corrections profession is a demanding work environment, and the ability to recruit and retain personnel is challenging, to say the least. The legislature recognized this, and the Growing Apprenticeships in Public Safety (GAPS) Act was passed last year.

The Maryland Correctional Administrators Association strongly opposes this bill and respectfully requests that this committee issue an **UNFAVORABLE REPORT** on House Bill 647.