



**Testimony in SUPPORT of *House Bill 647 – Correctional Services –
Restrictive Housing*
Judiciary Committee
March 4, 2025**

The Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington (JCRC) serves as the public affairs and community relations arm of the Jewish community. We represent over 100 Jewish organizations, synagogues, and social services agencies throughout Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The JCRC is strongly committed to cultivating a society based on freedom, justice, and pluralism. We work throughout the region to advocate for our agencies that serve the most vulnerable residents and to campaign for important policy interests on behalf of the Jewish community and all Marylanders. The JCRC is focused on promoting social justice and intergroup relations and combatting antisemitism and all forms of hatred.

The JCRC's advocacy is grounded in core values of the Jewish faith: Justice, repentance, and the preservation of human life (Exodus 20:13). It is from this perspective that we support House Bill 647. This Bill ensures that no one can be placed in isolation for longer than 15 consecutive days or more than 20 days during a 60-day period. The Bill also states that vulnerable people -- including 21 years old and younger, 55 years of age and older, and women who are pregnant, postpartum, recently experience a miscarriage or caring for a child -- can not be placed in restrictive housing.

Our agency believes that conditions of confinement must be humane and that certain conditions, including the overuse of restrictive housing, can impose dire consequences more egregious than the sentences themselves. We also are extremely concerned about the devastating mental health effects of restricting housing. The practice of keeping an individual in restrictive housing with no opportunities for meaningful human interaction causes long term harm to an incarcerated person's mental and physical health. Additionally, this practice does not only injure the incarcerated individual, but also our entire system of corrections. Upon release, individuals who have been harmed by the lack of adequate human interaction, are incapable of productive participation in society. For these reasons, the JCRC supports HB 647 and asks for a favorable report.