



## MARYLAND ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE REFORM

Citizens working to reform criminal justice in Maryland



[www.MA4JR.org](http://www.MA4JR.org)

**House Judiciary Committee**

**March 4, 2025**

### **Testimony in support of HB 647—Correctional Services – Restrictive Housing**

We are testifying on behalf of the [Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform](http://www.MA4JR.org) (MAJR), where we serve as executive committee members and co-chairs of the Behind the Walls Workgroup.

Cruel and excessive use of restrictive housing can harm those experiencing mental illness and even the relatively healthy. Being locked down without programming or social interaction for 23 hours daily can contribute to cognitive regression, muscular loss, and other health issues. In addition, it can impact effective and successful reentry as individuals deal with post-incarceration syndrome going from solitary to the streets.

Restrictions on the use of solitary confinement are a necessary step toward mitigating the harmful psychological and physical effects of prolonged isolation. Numerous studies have shown that extended solitary confinement exacerbates mental health conditions, increases recidivism rates, and poses significant ethical concerns. This bill prioritizes institutional order and incarcerated individuals' well-being by ensuring that restrictive housing creates the least confining environment necessary for safety and security.

Any legislation in this area should also require that people in restrictive housing have at least four hours of time out of their cells and that they have programming available to them.

We believe that local detention facilities should be excluded from these requirements, because of their limited space and resources.

The provision that prohibits placing members of vulnerable populations—such as individuals with mental illness, disabilities, or other risk factors—into restrictive housing for any period is a crucial measure in safeguarding human rights. These individuals often experience disproportionate harm from solitary confinement, making this policy change essential for a more just and rehabilitative correctional system.

This bill is a critical step forward in reducing the excessive use of restrictive housing and ensuring that it is used only when absolutely necessary, with appropriate safeguards. We urge you to support and advocate for its passage. The reforms it proposes align with evidence-based practices and national trends toward more humane correctional policies.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to contact us if you would like to discuss this issue further.

Sincerely,

Donna Rojas  
District 6

Judith Lichtenberg  
District 22