



HB 647 - Correctional Services – Restrictive Housing

MCAA Position: **UNFAVORABLE**

TO: Judiciary Committee

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 the promotion and improvements of best correctional practices **OPPOSES** House Bill 647 which seeks to limit the use of solitary confinement in correctional facilities.

Similar legislation, such as New Jersey's Isolated Confinement Restriction Act, has led to significant unintended consequences, including an increase in assaults on correctional staff, greater staffing demands, and severe financial strain on correctional facilities. The increased risk to staff and detainee safety and the added pressure on an already strained workforce undermine the ability to maintain secure environments in correctional facilities.

Furthermore, the bill's proposed reduction in allowable restrictive housing hours and limitations on placement hinder our ability to manage individuals who pose a persistent threat to safety. These restrictions will lead to higher incidents of violence, making facilities less safe for both staff and detainees.

Maryland's correctional facilities already comply with strict state standards set by the Maryland Commission on Correctional Standards, ensuring that safety, health, and operational requirements are met. In addition to state compliance, many facilities also pursue certifications from national organizations like the American Correctional Association (ACA) and the National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC), which hold facilities to the highest standards. These certifications provide an additional layer of assurance that restrictive housing is used appropriately and ethically, with thorough assessments involved in every decision.

The financial burden of these changes would also be significant. Maryland's correctional facilities would require costly infrastructure modifications and additional staffing to comply with the mandates of Senate Bill 702, diverting crucial resources away from rehabilitative programs.

The mandates of House Bill 647 fail to account for the responsible use of restrictive housing in Maryland. Deteriorating this essential tool would have detrimental effects on the safety, staffing, and financial stability of the correctional facilities statewide. For these reasons, the MCAA respectfully requests an **UNFAVORABLE** report on Senate Bill 702.