

TESTIMONY ON HB 1154

Correctional Services - Restrictive Housing Government, Labor, and Elections Committee February 26, 2026

SUPPORT

Submitted by: **Magdalena Tsiongas, MPH**

Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr and members of the GLEC Committee:

I, Magdalena Tsiongas, am testifying in support of HB 1154. I am submitting this testimony as the family member of an incarcerated person in a Maryland prison. My own loved one spent a total of 4 years on and off in solitary confinement starting at 20 years old, an experience of profound isolation that impacts his mental health to this day.

So often, “restrictive housing” or solitary confinement is used as a catch-all in Maryland prisons. People who are going through acute mental health crisis are put alone in cells, people who are being punished for an infraction are put alone in cells, people who feel unsafe around others are put alone in cells. In 2024, 886 individuals with serious mental illness were placed in restrictive housing in Maryland.

While the Department of Corrections may say they do not use solitary confinement, in reality, there are multiple types of restrictive housing they use from administrative segregation, disciplinary segregation, protective custody, suicide watch, and Maximum II Structured Housing.

This is not an isolated issue. According to the [2024 Restrictive Housing Report from the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services](#), during FY 2024, 5,976 individuals were placed on some form of restrictive housing, which reflects a 14.5% increase of individuals affected compared to FY 2023. There were also 13,910 placements onto restrictive housing during the year, a 29.5% increase from the previous year.

For individuals held on disciplinary restrictive housing, which is the most commonly used type in 2024, the average length of stay was over 30 days. For those in Special Housing Step Down, the average length of stay was over 3 months (109.6 days). International standards, including [the United Nations](#), classify solitary confinement beyond 15 DAYS torture. When wardens tell you prisons cannot be run without solitary confinement, they means they must use torture. Make no mistake, therefore, that Maryland is torturing people in prisons by keeping them alone in cells, deprived of human contact, for sometimes years at a time.

I urge you for a **favorable report** on HB 1154.

Thank you