



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 26, 2026

HB 1154
Correctional Services - Restrictive Housing

House Government, Labor & Elections Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of House Bill 1154. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

House Bill 1154 would prohibit individuals held in custody from being kept in solitary confinement. House Bill 1154 dictates that those in custody may not be held longer than necessary, longer than fifteen consecutive days or more than twenty days in a sixty-day period. Additionally, any individual who is held in restrictive housing must be offered at least four hours of time outside their cell.

Pope Francis equated punishment involving external isolation to a form of "torture." He denoted that states should not be "allowed, juridical or in fact, to subordinate respect for the dignity of the human person to any other purpose, even should it serve some sort of social utility." (*Address of Pope Francis to the Delegates of the International Association of Penal Law*, October 2014)

The Church upholds that systems of criminal justice should seek both justice and mercy, with an emphasis upon restoration of communities, victims and offenders. Restrictive housing is a means toward none of these ends and is a regressive policy. It is thus important that the State of Maryland, at the very least, seriously limit its usage. Regardless of their offense, prisoners are exposed to the perils of incarceration for the crimes they've committed. Solitary confinement only compiles these perils and limits their hope for rehabilitation. Simply the relative isolation of confinement is enough to aggravate existing mental health issues.

The Conference appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 1154.