



BILL NO.: HB 1154
TITLE: Correctional Services – Restrictive Housing
SPONSOR: Delegate Phillips
COMMITTEE: Government, Labor and Elections
POSITION: **OPPOSE**
DATE: February 26, 2026

Baltimore County **OPPOSES** House Bill 1154 – Correctional Services – Restrictive Housing due to the major operational and fiscal impact of the proposed legislation.

The Baltimore County Department of Corrections (BCDC) has recently implemented significant operational changes over the past four months to improve conditions in restrictive housing, reducing both the number of incarcerated individuals placed there and the duration of their confinement. Despite these progressive changes, HB 1154 imposes requirements that BCDC cannot currently meet and jeopardizes the safety of both incarcerated individuals and staff.

The Baltimore County Department of Corrections is willing to work collaboratively to assist with the development of a bill that improves the conditions of restrictive housing, without compromising staff safety or imposing millions of dollars in costs on Baltimore County residents.

HB 1154 requires that incarcerated individuals be housed in the least restrictive environment necessary. Over the past four months, BCDC has implemented changes that meet this requirement. Currently BCDC does not have an additional housing unit within the facility that could further satisfy this standard.

The legislation also mandates that each incarcerated individual receives a minimum of four hours outside their assigned cell per day. Incarcerated individuals are typically placed in restrictive housing due to assaultive or disruptive behavior. In cases involving assaults, BCDC must separate the involved individuals and ensure they do not have further contact. Additional requirements mandate that certain individuals remain apart for legal and safety reasons. Providing the additional recreation time would make it impossible for BCDC to ensure these keep separate requirements are not violated.

To meet the standards laid out in the bill, BCDC would need to construct additional housing units or make extensive renovations to existing units. The exact cost of construction or renovation cannot be calculated at this time. However, renovations are expected to cost Baltimore County millions of dollars. The cost of constructing additional housing would be



exponentially higher. Furthermore, the absolute minimum staffing impact of six additional correctional officers would cost Baltimore County \$372,000 annually.

BCDC's recent progressive changes have required two cells housing incarcerated individuals to receive recreation simultaneously, allowing a maximum of four individuals out at one time. To fully meet the requirements the legislation, BCDC would need to allow 12 to 16 incarcerated individuals to recreate together. Permitting a group of this size, comprised of individuals with histories of assaultive and disruptive behavior would significantly jeopardize the safety of the two correctional officers assigned to the housing unit. Additionally, responding to an emergency in this environment would require a substantial number of staff to be pulled from their routine duties, due to the heightened risks posed by managing a large unpredictable group.

HB 1154 limits the number of days an individual can be placed in restrictive housing to 20 days within a 60-day period. Many individuals are repeat offenders who display assaultive behavior. Placing such a severe limit on the amount of time an individual spends in restrictive housing jeopardizes the safety of the facility's general population. The bill also applies to incarcerated individuals housed in administrative segregation. These individuals are routinely placed in administrative segregation for 30 to 60 days. Individuals are generally placed in administrative segregation to separate them from the general population due to multiple incidents of causing harm to other incarcerated individuals or conspiring with others to commit acts of violence against both incarcerated individuals and staff. The inability to remove these individuals from the general population of the detention center is another reason this legislation creates a massive fiscal liability for Baltimore County through potential civil litigation.

This bill would severely impact the recruitment and retention of correctional officers. Similar legislation passed in New York resulted in catastrophic consequences, costing the state over 1 billion dollars following a 22-day strike that began on February 17, 2025. More than a year later, the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision is still relying on the National Guard for staffing, due to the massive loss of correctional officers, primarily caused by the unsafe and untenable working conditions created by the passage of the HALT Act.

Recruiting and retaining correctional officers is already an extremely difficult task, and HB 1154 will only make it more challenging. This legislation will create serious risks for staff and overall facility security, by significantly limiting the ability to impose necessary safety measures on individuals who commit heinous acts of violence against both other incarcerated individuals and correctional staff.

Accordingly, Baltimore County urges an **UNFAVORABLE** report from the House Bill Government, Labor and Elections Committee on House Bill 1154. For more information, contact Kayenda Twesigye, State Legislative Officer of Government Affairs at ktwesigye@baltimorecountymd.gov.