



TESTIMONY FOR HB1154 Correctional Services - Restrictive Housing

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Phillips

Committee: Government, Labor, and Elections

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition
Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB1154 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Our members object to inhumane and potentially harmful conditions associated with restrictive housing, i.e., solitary confinement. Prolonged periods in restrictive housing can have severe psychological and physical effects on individuals, particularly the vulnerable, such as individuals with mental health issues, the elderly, and pregnant individuals. HB1154 aims to mitigate these negative impacts by reducing the time spent in restrictive housing and ensuring that the conditions are as humane as possible.

Specifically, HB1154 limits the duration an individual can be placed in restrictive housing from approximately 22 hours to 20 hours within a 24-hour period. It requires all restrictive housing units to create the least restrictive environment necessary. Furthermore, the bill prohibits the placement of vulnerable populations, including those with mental and behavioral health issues, the elderly, LGBTQ, and pregnant individuals, in restrictive housing for any period of time.

By limiting the duration and conditions of restrictive housing, the bill promotes the humane treatment of incarcerated individuals, which can lead to better rehabilitation outcomes and reduce recidivism rates. Protecting vulnerable populations from the harsh conditions of restrictive housing ensures their safety and well-being, fostering a more just and equitable correctional system. Moreover, this bill aligns with Maryland's commitment to upholding human rights and dignity within its correctional facilities.

Implementing HB1154 will likely have positive ripple effects on the community outside correctional facilities. As individuals are treated more humanely and with dignity, they are more likely to reintegrate successfully into society upon release, becoming productive members of their communities. This, in turn, can lead to safer neighborhoods and a reduction in the overall crime rate.

The Maryland Legislative Coalition strongly supports HB1154 and urges a favorable report from committee. Our members want a more humane and just correctional system that respects the rights and dignity of all individuals.