



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Testimony in Support of HB 921- Juvenile Law - Confinement and Restrictive Housing - Limitations

To: Senator Will Smith, Jr., Chair, Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice-Chair,
and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee
From: Karen “Candy” Clark, Lead Advocate Criminal Justice Reform
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry-Maryland
Date: April 1, 2026

The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland asks for a favorable vote on **HB 921 - Juvenile Law - Confinement and Restrictive Housing - Limitations**. This bill aligns with our values of justice and equity, which call us to honor the inherent worth and dignity of all people, which includes those behind prison walls.

HB 921 specifies **WHEN** and **HOW** a minor may be placed in “Locked Door Seclusion” or “Restrictive Housing,” or “Solitary Confinement.” This can be a traumatic period for the minor and steps must be taken to assure their safety and health, while making the adjustments needed for an effective placement. The process demonstrates a well thought out plan that aligns with our values of equity and justice, which “honors the worth and dignity ‘of the minor.

Depending on the circumstances a minor may be required to be placed in restrictive housing or may personally volunteer to enter.

The following list describes **WHEN** “Locked Door Seclusions” could be implemented:

1. A minor could not be placed in restrictive housing solely for discipline, punishment, staff convenience, staff shortage, or retaliation. However, a minor may temporarily be placed in restrictive housing if there is an immediate risk of physical harm to the child or others, or an imminent chance of escape.
2. After all less restrictive measures have been tried.
3. When placed in restrictive housing, the minor is to be situated in the least restrictive conditions possible and given an explanation about the reason for the change.
4. The locked door seclusion should be terminated as soon as the threat is over followed by a debriefing with a behavioral health review.

HB 921 also clarifies **HOW** a “Locked Door Seclusion” would need to be implemented:

- a. Trauma informed, developmentally appropriate, and time-limited.
- b. With a health care provider to conduct a screening of the minor’s mental health within 30 minutes of the placement and offer any mental health services needed. *In addition, the child care staff would need to perform visual inspections of the child in 15 minute intervals.*
- c. Including: scheduled snacks and meals, access to water, bathrooms and hygiene items, as well as educational services.

HB 921 provides a comprehensive guide for helping a minor adjust to the newness or changes to the incarceration system. This thoughtful expanse of work balances the juvenile’s safety with their mental health and well-being, which honors their inherent worth and dignity. However, all of our incarcerated can benefit by a clear and calm path to help them navigate this system as it guides them towards their release.

We ask for a favorable report on **HB 921**.

Karen “Candy” Clark
Criminal Justice Reform Lead Advocate