

Oral Testimony in Support of SB908, Correctional Services - Restrictive Housing

My name is Perpetua Abongnelah. I am a Maryland resident in Montgomery County. I strongly support the Correctional Services - Restrictive Housing bill (RH) because many lives will be saved. My son, Funiba Abongnelah, a 27-year-old African American was incarcerated at age 20 and almost lost his life in RH. Funiba has a long history of Serious Mental Illnesses and a seizure disorder. His mental health has declined significantly due to RH. Funiba spent four months in RH in 2023, four months in 2024 with no yard time for sunlight, ten months in 2025 where he suffered abuse, neglect, and assault after witnessing Correctional Officers (CO) assault his cellmate until he became unconscious. Funiba was also assaulted by same COs and locked in RH. Although Funiba's cellmate's record indicated that Funiba complied with the COs instructions while his cellmate did not, Funiba's record stated that Funiba violated institutional policies. Funiba among many things was denied food, water, medication/medicals, shower, bible, adequate out-of-cell time, and fan during summer months.

I filed grievances with DPSCS and other agencies to save his life but with no resolution although investigations were made. Funiba experienced retaliation, which led to a significant decline in his mental and physical health. I later connected with A Mothers' Cry (AMC), and because of their immediate intervention the Office of the Correctional Ombudsman (OCO) helped to transfer Funiba to another facility in general population where he is recovering.

Without A mother's Cry and OCO's intervention, my son would have died in RH. Funiba has lived in seven Maryland State Prisons and witnessed several inmates lost their lives and minds in RH. Some defecate and urinate in containers while ingesting and throwing them at COs resulting in more disciplinary actions.

Funiba made mistakes as a teenager but has reflected and takes accountability for his actions. He helps inmates by sharing commissary, caring for injured cellmates, and praying for them. He strongly desires an improvement in RH policies.

Please remember my son's story as you make these critical decisions about RH. Thank you for listening.

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