



## Council on American-Islamic Relations

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Chair Sandy Bartlett  
House Judiciary Committee  
100 Taylor House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

### Re: Testimony In Support of HB 921 2 Juvenile Law - Confinement and Restrictive Housing - Limitations

Dear Chair Bartlett and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

On behalf of the Maryland office of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), we respectfully urge a **favorable report** on House Bill 921. HB 921 establishes critical safeguards limiting when and how incarcerated minors may be placed in restrictive housing in facilities operated by the Department of Juvenile Services. The bill makes clear that children may not be placed in restrictive housing for discipline, punishment, retaliation, administrative convenience, or staffing shortages. Instead, restrictive housing may only be used as a temporary measure where the managing official finds by clear and convincing evidence that there is an immediate and substantial risk of physical harm or a threat to facility security - and only when no other reasonable means can eliminate that risk.

Importantly, HB 921 limits such placement to the shortest time necessary, not to exceed six hours. It requires prompt notification to the minor, development of a plan for return to the general population, and a mental health screening within one hour of placement. The bill also ensures that minors in restrictive housing retain access to education, visits, phone calls, medical and mental health care, and other basic privileges afforded to youth in the general population.

These provisions reflect well-established research demonstrating that isolation and restrictive housing are particularly harmful to children, whose brains are still developing. Extended isolation increases the risk of anxiety, depression, self-harm, and long-term psychological trauma. Youth in the juvenile system - many of whom have already experienced significant trauma - require rehabilitation, not practices that exacerbate harm.

HB 921 strikes a careful balance. It does not eliminate the ability of facilities to respond to genuine safety threats. Rather, it ensures that restrictive housing is used only as a last resort, for the shortest duration necessary, and under conditions that preserve dignity and access to services. It also allows youth to request restrictive housing voluntarily, with the ability to revoke that request at any time.

Maryland has taken important steps in recent years to reform its juvenile justice system in ways that reflect evidence-based practices and constitutional principles. HB 921 continues that progress by codifying reasonable limits, transparency, and accountability in the use of restrictive housing for children.

Children in state custody are in state care and under the state's responsibility. Their safety, mental health, and rehabilitation must remain a priority. For these reasons, CAIR respectfully urges the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 921.

Thank you for your consideration.

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Sincerely,

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**Washington D.C.**

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