

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 310**  
**Correctional Services – Restrictive Housing – Individuals With Developmental or Intellectual Disabilities**

Good afternoon Chair and members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is **Natasha White**, and I serve as the Director of Community Engagement at Interfaith Action for Human Rights. I am also a survivor of long-term isolation during my incarceration and have worked across New York, Virginia, and Maryland advocating for humane correctional policies grounded in safety, rehabilitation, and human dignity.

I am here today in strong support of **House Bill 310**.

This legislation addresses one of the most vulnerable populations within our correctional system — individuals living with developmental or intellectual disabilities. These individuals often enter incarceration with significant cognitive, behavioral, and communication challenges that require clinical care, not isolation.

House Bill 310 takes an essential and responsible step by requiring clinical assessment at intake and allowing qualified professionals to make recommendations regarding appropriate placement and care. Early identification is critical. Without proper screening, individuals with developmental or intellectual disabilities are too often misunderstood, disciplined for behaviors connected to their disability, and placed in restrictive housing environments that worsen their condition.

Restrictive housing relies heavily on isolation, reduced stimulation, and limited human interaction. For individuals with developmental or intellectual disabilities, these conditions can lead to rapid psychological deterioration, increased confusion, self-harm, victimization, and behavioral escalation rather than stabilization. What may appear as noncompliance is frequently a disability-related response to stress or inability to process instructions.

This bill appropriately limits the use of restrictive housing for this population unless a serious prohibited act occurs. That balance protects institutional safety while recognizing that disability should never become a pathway to harsher punishment.

From both lived experience and policy work, I can say clearly: isolation does not correct behavior when disability is the underlying issue. Appropriate treatment, structured support, and clinical intervention do.

Maryland has an opportunity through House Bill 310 to align correctional practice with medical understanding, disability rights principles, and basic standards of humane treatment. Protecting individuals with developmental or intellectual disabilities ultimately improves facility safety, reduces crises, and supports successful reentry outcomes.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a **favorable report on House Bill 310**.

Thank you for your time and consideration.