

# SUPPORT SB 774

## MARYLAND ALLIANCE FOR JUSTICE REFORM

Working to end unnecessary incarceration and build strong, safe communities



TO: Chair Bobby Zirkin and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
FROM: Phil Caroom, MAJR Executive Committee  
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Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR) strongly supports SB 774 seeking to reduce the harmful use of restrictive housing as to minor inmates, with reasonable exceptions, and to require annual reporting that can show whether progress is being made.

It is well-known that Maryland's use of restrictive housing has been excessive—about twice the national average. Simply for financial reasons, this practice should be reduced because restrictive housing is estimated to be three times more costly than ordinary incarceration.

<https://www.ma4jr.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Solitary-Confinement.pdf>

But there are other equally well-known negative impacts of restrictive housing beyond its cost. Most importantly, for minors, it is commonly recognized that:

**“Children in solitary don’t attend school; they often don’t receive counseling, family contact or treatment.**

**Not surprisingly, these conditions are profoundly destructive, leading a significant number of young people to cut themselves, engage in other forms of self-harm, or take their own lives.**

In addition to [depression and anxiety](#), solitary can also cause sleeplessness and long lasting trauma. Isolation is harmful for anyone, but particularly for adolescents whose ongoing development depends on social interaction. And it doesn't work. In fact, [decreased reliance on solitary](#) is linked to increased facility safety. ”

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/policing/2019/01/11/policing-usa-juvenile-detention-solitary-confinement-mental-illness/2505702002/>

For these reasons, minors' restrictive housing has been minimized under the bipartisan federal First Step Act.

SB 774 would help Maryland follow this good example of the First Step Act and would require reporting to confirm that progress is made.

For all these reasons, MAJR strongly urges adoption of SB 774 to require more healthy treatment of minors housed within the Division of Corrections, as well as monitoring of this risky practice.

*NOTE: Phil Caroom joins this testimony on behalf of the Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform executive committee and not on behalf of the Maryland Judiciary.*