

[HB 67](#)

[Newsletter - Interfaith Action for Human Rights \(interfaithactionhr.org\)](#)

Sample letter: [Newsletter - Interfaith Action for Human Rights \(interfaithactionhr.org\)](#) It can also be send directly from the IAHR website

Dear Delegates [Clippinger](#) and [Moon](#), Senators [Smith](#) and [Waldstreicher](#):

*Direct release from restrictive housing is a public safety concern and will again come before the General Assembly this year. Because of the effect of the pandemic on our prisons, reforming this practice has become even more imperative than ever before. **I am asking you to support [HB 67](#)** which will end direct release from restrictive housing.*

Prior to the onset of the pandemic in 2020, the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DCSPS) released approximately 250 to 300 people each year directly to the community from restrictive housing without any form of step-down transition to prepare them to return to the community. Often, these individuals have no clear plans about where to live, where they will find employment, or how to access services they need, such as health care or assistance in obtaining forms of personal identification. Without any kind of preparation, re-socialization, transition coordination or reentry services, incarcerated people in restrictive housing are the least likely to return safely to our communities and are more likely to reoffend. The practice of direct release from restrictive housing puts both communities and the individual inmate at risk.

In 2016, DPSCS was legislatively mandated to submit annual reports concerning the use of restrictive housing in state prison facilities to the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention and the General Assembly on or before December 31st. The Department has failed to provide these reports for the past two years.

The pandemic has made this situation worse. Since the onset of the pandemic, our entire incarcerated population has been placed in restrictive housing. The thousands of individuals who were released to mitigate the spread of COVID and its variants through the system, were released directly from this restrictive housing situation.

The DPSCS dashboard projects that 1558 individuals will be released in 2022. These individuals too are impacted by restrictive housing and its harm and damage– to the individual and our communities.

*[HB 67](#) will come before you and your committee this session to end direct release from restrictive housing. This legislation seeks to end this unsafe practice by establishing a Step-Down program for individuals in restrictive housing. **I am asking you to support [HB 67](#).***

Numerous studies have shown that a Step-Down process reduces the risk of recidivism. Legislation like [HB 67](#) has been successfully implemented in sixteen states. This legislation will not add to the cost of Maryland's prison system. During the past year, DPSCS has reduced its prison populations by ten percent, freeing up resources. It has also added social work staff and has the resources to implement this modest and needed change.

This current practice poses a threat to public safety and undermines the chances of incarcerated people to reenter the community successfully.

Please support [HB 67](#) when it comes before you.