

# Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform

Working together for a criminal justice system that better serves our communities



Chair and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of MAJR, an all-volunteer organization with 2,000 members statewide, I respectfully urge your favorable report on Senate Bill 908. This legislation reflects a growing national consensus that prolonged restrictive housing causes serious psychological and physical harm, undermines rehabilitation, and does not meaningfully improve safety. Maryland now has the opportunity to align its correctional policies with reforms already adopted in other states.

SB 908's 15-day limit on restrictive housing mirrors the approach taken in New York under the HALT Solitary Confinement Act, which caps segregated confinement at 15 consecutive days and 20 days within a 60-day period. Similar reforms have been enacted in New Jersey and advanced in Colorado. These changes were grounded in clear evidence that extended isolation increases the risk of depression, anxiety, and self-harm, while offering little benefit to institutional security. Maryland's proposal follows this well-established reform model.

The bill's prohibition on placing members of vulnerable populations in restrictive housing is especially important. States such as New York and California have restricted or eliminated solitary confinement for young people, older adults, pregnant individuals, and those with serious mental illness. SB 908 similarly recognizes that youth, elders, individuals with mental or developmental disabilities, and pregnant or postpartum individuals are uniquely vulnerable to the damaging effects of isolation. Protecting these groups is both humane and fiscally responsible, reducing preventable medical and mental health crises.

The requirement that individuals in restrictive housing be offered at least four hours out of their cells each day also reflects emerging best practice. New York adopted this standard to ensure that separation does not become extreme deprivation. Meaningful out-of-cell time for programming and treatment reduces tension and supports safer facilities.

Finally, SB 908 strengthens protections for pregnant incarcerated individuals and requires independent oversight through review by the Correctional Ombudsman. Similar to Illinois and Washington State, these accountability measures ensure that reform is not merely aspirational but implemented in practice.

Maryland does not need to reinvent the wheel. The core provisions of SB 908 have already been successfully implemented elsewhere. This bill offers a balanced approach: it allows correctional officials to address genuine safety threats while setting clear, humane limits on a practice known to cause lasting harm. For these reasons, MAJR respectfully urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 908.

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