



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

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Testimony in Support of HB 67 - Correctional Services -Step Down Programs – Cause of Action

TO: Chairman Clippinger and Members of the House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Karen “Candy” Clark, Lead Advocate, Criminal Justice Reform
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland.

DATE: February 1, 2021

The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland (UULM-MD) asks for a favorable vote on HB 67. We believe in incorporating compassion, equity and justice into our actions, our Second Principle. Compassion is necessary to change the current practice of releasing individuals directly from being held in restrictive housing to the outside community without any required adjustment counseling. Being kept in restricted housing is itself traumatizing and its impact varies on the state and needs of the individual. This bill provides that 180 days PRIOR to release, the individual will be assessed and a program designed that will help prepare them for a successful reentry. Not only is this a more humane and respectful approach; but without this process the person is more likely to recidivate and—if left untreated—is a higher safety risk to the larger community. Evidence-based data shows a sentence punishment alone does not usually serve to deter further offenses. People need to have their psychological issues—and the reason why they engaged in criminal behavior—addressed.

The 2018 annual Restrictive Housing report revealed that 287 people were released directly to the outside climbing up from the previous year. If we want people to perform in a more civil manner and expect things to be improved after they leave prison; how can they be dismissed so inhumanely? The Sentencing Project released data that showed Black men and women are disproportionately overrepresented in solitary confinement. In 2016, it reported that 24% of the female general population was African American, but they composed 41% of the Restricted Housing population. These numbers could indicate that there is something more involved here. However, we don't know what the data for the past two years was, because the Annual Restrictive Housing Reports were not released.

UULM-MD urges your support for HB 67 which treats those behind the walls more humanely and sheds light on the inequity of the racial aspect of those in solitary. HB67 should help to transform these injustices. Please help make this transformation a reality.

Respectfully submitted

Karen Clark

UULM-MD Criminal Justice Lead

1. Race and Justice News: Black Women Overrepresented in Solitary Confinement, Dec. 16,2016

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