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**Testimony in Support of SB459
Correctional Services – Restrictive Housing – Limitations 3 (Maryland Mandela Act)**

TO: Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Carol Stern

My name is Carol Stern and I am testifying in favor of SB459 as a resident of Montgomery County’s District 16 and a member of Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation in Bethesda.

There are two Jewish texts that shape my religious and moral abhorrence of solitary confinement. In Genesis Chapter 1, we learn that **the human is created in God’s image - *B’tselem Elohim*. We all contain the divine spark, and we all deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. This applies to all people, whether they are incarcerated or not.**

The second text is in Genesis Chapter 2, where we learn that **“It is not good for the human to be alone.”** This is a powerful statement about our need to be nurtured by others at all times in our life. It is never good to be away from the nurturing company of other people and no one **should be alone during the difficult time of incarceration.** These two verses inspire the spiritual and moral imperative to work for changes to solitary confinement laws.

I can only imagine the pain that anyone feels when they learn that their family member has been placed in restrictive housing and isolated from human contact. Everyone must have human interaction, exercise, proper diet, and stimulation to fully reach their potential.

Solitary confinement is an archaic practice that should be ended and has been proven to be detrimental to everyone because of the toxic nature of this restrictive housing. We know that there is a lasting effect if anyone is exposed to extreme idleness, sensory deprivation, and lack of human interaction. This bill is one step toward treating incarcerated Marylanders with the dignity and respect that all people deserve.

I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB459.