

Desiree Morales

H5927 and H5928

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Dear Members of House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Desiree Morales, I'm a current student studying to become a Social worker. I am here today to ask for your support on bills H5927 and H5928. These are critical pieces of legislation not only made to put in place the right principles but to be the voice for those who can't speak. As someone who is preparing for a career rooted in values of justice, dignity, and human rights; solitary confinement and the way it blatantly abuses power does not sit right with me. One incarcerated individual said "When you get an institutionally backed staff that comes poking around your business, looking to cause trouble, you can easily find the root of the problem with these simple questions. 1. Is this worker psychologically fit to work? 2. Is this worker under the influence of drugs/alcohol? 3. Is this worker being ordered to cause trouble?" These questions highlight the urgent need for transparency and accountability in correctional facilities. Requiring officers to wear body cameras is a crucial step in ensuring ethical conduct and preventing unnecessary cruelty. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we all experienced the harsh effects of isolation. Quarantine, while necessary, took a major toll on mental health leading to increased anxiety, depression, and cognitive struggles. Many fell behind and felt trapped in environments that drained them emotionally. Now, imagine if that quarantine had no end in sight. locked in a small space for 22 to 24 hours a day, with no human interaction, activities, and no control over your circumstances. That is solitary confinement. The same psychological harm we saw during quarantine loneliness, stress, and decline in mental health and well-being, occurs in solitary confinement, but at an extreme and often irreversible damage. There are no video calls with loved ones, no distractions through work or school, just complete

isolation. If a few months of quarantine set so many people back, what are we doing to those in solitary for months or years? Thank you for your time.