



Secular Maryland

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HB 179 - FWA

Indigenous Peoples' Day - Rule of Interpretation and Replacement of Columbus Day

Dear Chair Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Vice-Chair Bonnie Cullison, and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

Secular Maryland favors changes to Commercial Law §14–301, Financial Institutions §5–705, General Provisions §1–111, and State Personnel Pensions §9–201 all of which are consistent with the changes being made to those provisions by this bill. The goal of these proposed changes is to remove unnecessary references that appear to favor some religious viewpoints over competing viewpoints. There is a tendency for such religiously biased references to favor majority viewpoints, specifically theism, monotheism, and Christianity, over minority viewpoints, such as atheism, polytheism, and non-Christian religions. And that is what we find in these sections of our laws.

Each business, financial institution, etc., should be unencumbered with regard to the religious holidays, if any, that prompts their closure. Commercial Law §14–301(b) says “Business day” means any calendar day except Sunday or the following ...’ could be shortened to “Business day” means any calendar except the following ...’. This law could also be modified to say that business which opt to operate six days per week can decide which day of each week they will close. Also, the ‘... and Christmas Day.’ could be deleted. Financial Institutions §5–705 (a) (1)(iv) “Good Friday;” could be deleted. (xi) “Christmas Day” could also be deleted. State Personnel Pensions §9–201 (12) “December 25, for Christmas Day;” could be deleted. For these same reasons, General Provisions §1–111(a)(6) “Good Friday;” and (a)(16) “December 25, for Christmas Day;” could be deleted. Also (b)(2) could be revised to say ‘if that date falls on a non-business day then the first business immediately before or after that date.’

Different business closure days may have different impacts on profit. Some may argue it is therefore unfair to allow business to individually select their weekly day of closure. However, government selecting a common closure day does not remedy this problem,

instead it shifts who is being disadvantaged away from a majority with greater political clout to religious minorities with less political clout who are compelled to close their business two days a week instead of one. Government should avoid taking sides between religious differences over which day of the week is the day that a deity has instructed is to be the day of rest by not identifying the day businesses close.

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