



Judicial Proceedings Committee
Executive Nominations Committee
Vice Chair, Rules Committee

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

TESTIMONY

Senate Bill 1158 – Crime of Violence – Educational Facilities, Medical Facilities, and Places of Worship – Penalty (Sacred Places Safety Act)

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman, Mr. Vice Chairman, and to my colleagues on this esteemed committee. For the record, I am Senator C. Anthony Muse, and I am here today to urge this distinguished body to vote favorably on Senate Bill 1158 – the Sacred Places Safety Act of 2024.

SB 1158 establishes statutory definitions for “Sacred Places” in Maryland, and includes:

1. Educational Institutions;
2. Medical Facilities; and
3. Places of Worship

This bill also adds a penalty enhancement on top of any sentence imposed – in cases where a violent act has been committed in one of these designated spaces.

In Prince George’s County, we are confronting growing occurrences of violence in spaces where our community are most vulnerable. There are several notable cases which not only highlights what we’re seeing in the County and across jurisdictions, but also underscores the significance of this legislation:

- **Kaeden Holland AKA “Baby K”**

On May 1, 2023, three teens boarded a school bus in Oxon Hill, Maryland and attacked a student. Mr. Holland, attempted to shoot the victim multiple times. Fortunately, the weapon malfunctioned, and the student survived with only minor injuries. Mr. Holland recently plead guilty, where he is facing up to 25 years.

- **Wilson Chavis**

On June 6, 2023, Wilson Chavis, owner of Compassion and Serenity Funeral Home struck two people after he opened fire during a burial service. One of the victims, died from the injuries. The other victim fortunately survived. Law Enforcement and the Prosecution learned from the investigation is that Mr. Chavis, confronted individuals he’d been in a longstanding dispute with. During the dispute, he pulled out his gun and fired multiple shots which resulted in a fatality. He’s has been charged with 1st Degree Murder and related offenses.

These are just two examples of why this legislation is critical. Our residents deserve to feel safe whether they are going to a place of worship, learning, or celebrating the life of a loved-one.

It is critical that we prioritize the well-being of all our residents and safeguard their ability to worship, learn, or access medical care without fear of being preyed upon at a time where they're most vulnerable. We also want to support those in this state responsible for protecting our communities. SB 1158 accomplishes that and will allow prosecutors to fully hold these individuals accountable.

For the foregoing reasons, I urge a FAVORABLE report for SB 1158.