

CHERYL C. KAGAN
Legislative District 17
Montgomery County

Vice Chair
Education, Energy, and
the Environment Committee

Joint Audit and Evaluation Committee

Joint Committee on Federal Relations



Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Suite 2 West
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3134
800-492-7122 Ext. 3134
Cheryl.Kagan@senate.maryland.gov

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony SB93: Church to Faith

Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

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Maryland is home to a wide and vibrant range of religious communities. According to a 2020 report by [the Association of Religion Data Archives](#), our state includes 316 temples, 142 synagogues, and 76 mosques, in addition to hundreds of churches of all denominations. Yet our statutes still refer only to churches, unintentionally overlooking hundreds of other houses of worship.

A 2017 DLS memo identified 142 uses of the word “church,” categorized as follows:

- Fifty-nine (41.5%) were exclusive (a stand-in for all houses of worship);
- Eighteen (12.6%) were combined (used alongside other faith institutions); and
- Sixty-four (45.0%) were singular (a proper noun, or where mentions of other houses of worship would be inappropriate).

In nearly half of these statutes, the diversity of Maryland’s religious traditions is compressed into the framework of one dominant term. Standardizing our terminology ensures that all faiths are treated with equal dignity and respect under the law.

SB93 updates our laws by replacing non-specific uses of church with inclusive language that more accurately reflects the religious landscape of our state. This is a modest but meaningful change that affirms Maryland’s commitment to fairness, accuracy, and respect for all communities.

This bill passed the Senate last session with strong bipartisan support (a vote of 45 to 1).

I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB93 again this year.