

# **SB93 - Annotated Code - Terminology - Clergy and C**

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**WRITTEN TESTIMONY**

**SB93: Annotated Code - Terminology - Clergy and Churches, Faith Institutions, and Places of Worship**

**Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

**January 21, 2026**

**SUPPORT**

**Background:** Senate Bill 93 would simply alter the terminology throughout the Annotated Code as it relates to a clergyman and churches to be more inclusive. Specifically it would change church to faith institution or place of worship and clergyman to member of the clergy.

**Written Comments:** The Baltimore Jewish Council (BJC) represents the Associated Jewish Federation of Baltimore and all its agencies, and programs, as well as the organized Jewish Community of Baltimore. We appreciate the bill sponsor bringing this important bill to our attention. Ensuring that inclusive language that is representative of all faiths is used in Maryland's code is important in showing Maryland's commitment to freedom and equality for all religions.

**For these reasons, we ask for a favorable report on SB93.**

*The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of the Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.*

**Sen. Kagan SB93\_ Church to Faith.pdf**

Uploaded by: Sen. Cheryl Kagan

Position: FAV

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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
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**Testimony SB93: Church to Faith**

Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee  
Wednesday, January 21, 2026, 11 AM

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.