



HOUSE HEALTH COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL 939

CERTIFICATES OF BIRTH - FILING - TIME PERIOD

FEBRUARY 24, 2026

SUPPORT

Agudath Israel of Maryland, the Mid-Atlantic regional office of Agudath Israel of America, a renowned national Jewish advocacy organization with chapters across the country, speaks on behalf of the Orthodox Jewish communities, families, and parents across Maryland. We speak today in support of House Bill 939.

House Bill 939 would change the period of time required for the completion and submission of a birth certificate with the Maryland Department of Health following the birth of a child. Currently, Maryland requires the submission within five days; HB 939 would change this to twelve.

This issue has particular relevance to Orthodox Jewish families. Per Jewish custom, rather than being named immediately upon birth, Jewish children generally receive their names several days after the birth. For boys, the name is traditionally announced as part of the circumcision ceremony eight days after the birth, while for girls the name is traditionally announced as part of synagogue services and in conjunction with the Torah reading, which in many instances may also take place more than five days after the birth. The adoption of a twelve-day timeline will be particularly helpful in cases where the circumcision is delayed due to medical reasons (most often, due to jaundice or respiratory issues in the newborn), which accounts for approximately twenty percent of cases. In the vast majority of these cases, the medical issue is resolved and the circumcision performed within twelve days of the birth.

The current requirement to submit the birth certificate, with the name of the child, within that time frame forces parents to finalize a name choice before their preferred time, rather than save the revealing of the name for the religious ceremony as is customary. Additionally, when the naming of the child carries special significance, such as in cases where the name will be in honor of a deceased relative, the five-day requirement can, and in many cases does, exacerbate internal family conflict. In some cases, parents may choose to submit a birth certificate without a name, and are then forced to go through the burden of submitting a second birth certificate once the name has been finalized and announced at the ceremony.

House Bill 939 would remove that stress by allowing parents to register the birth, with the chosen name, after the religious ceremony is concluded. We therefore respectfully request that you issue a favorable report on House Bill 939.