

SAMUEL I. "SANDY" ROSENBERG  
*Legislative District 41*  
Baltimore City

Health and Government Operations  
Committee

*Chair*

Health Occupations and  
Long-Term Care Subcommittee

*House Chair*

Joint Committee on Administrative,  
Executive, and Legislative Review



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Respond to Office Indicated

☐ *Annapolis Office*  
The Maryland House of Delegates  
6 Bladen Street, Room 365  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3297 · 301-858-3297  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3297  
Samuel.Rosenberg@house.state.md.us

☐ *District Office*  
4811 Liberty Heights Avenue  
Baltimore, Maryland 21207  
410-664-2646

Testimony of Delegate Samuel I. Rosenberg

Before the House Judiciary Committee

In Support of

**House Bill 750**

**Criminal Law - Interference With Access to or Egress**

**From a Religious Facility – Prohibition**

Chair Bartlett and Members of the Committee:

Religious institutions have been a vital part of American society both before and since religious freedom was enshrined in the U.S. Constitution. Every Marylander should feel safe in accessing their own religious facility. HB 750 ensures that Maryland is taking crucial steps to protect religious exercise.

Last year it was argued that this bill covers acts that are already covered in statute. However, the submitted 2025 letter from the office of the Attorney General explains how this bill covers certain circumstances not currently covered in Criminal Law § 10-303 and § 10-201. The Attorney General's analysis makes clear that § 10-303 requires force or threat of force and focuses on obstruction of the free exercise of religious beliefs, while § 10-201 addresses willful obstruction in a public place more generally. HB 750, by contrast, expressly targets the intentional physical detention, obstruction, impeding, or hindering of a person entering or exiting a religious facility. Even where overlapping statutes may exist, the State retains discretion to charge under the provision most appropriate to the conduct, ensuring proportional and effective enforcement.

This bill follows the precedent set by House Bill 748 (1989), which prohibits a person from physically preventing others from entering and exiting medical facilities. The circumstances which prompted that bill's enactment are again prevalent here. Maryland saw a nearly 20% increase in hate crime incidents in 2023, with religious-based crimes increasing by

over 26% and making up 21.5% of 2023's hate incidents, according to U.S. Department of Justice data.

Patrons of religious facilities feel less safe when accessing those facilities and are spending an enormous amount of money on security, as is the state itself. In FY 2025, \$5 million was allocated for the Protecting Against Hate Crimes Grant Program, that was doubled to \$10 million in FY 2026 and remains at \$10 million for the proposed FY 2027 budget.

This bill is needed now. In recent months, we have seen protests outside religious facilities in New York and Los Angeles where access to houses of worship was disrupted. In Maryland, there have been heightened security threats and increased demonstrations near houses of worship.

The passage of HB 750 will send an unmistakable message that Maryland will not tolerate interference with religious exercise and related activities, while preserving lawful First Amendment protection.

HB750 provides prosecutors with the needed tools to combat criminal interference with religious practice and related activities. This legislation will also discourage such incidents. These additional protections will support religious facilities twofold: these communities will gain a newfound sense of relief knowing that their government and law enforcement support them, while allowing some of their robust security funding to go to community-enriching programs or whatever the state and that institution believe will benefit their members.

**I urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 750.**

February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2026