

Chapter 425

(Senate Bill 177)

AN ACT concerning

**Criminal Law – ~~Interference With Access to or Egress From a Religious Facility~~
Obstruction or Interference With Exercise of Religious Beliefs – Prohibition**

FOR the purpose of prohibiting a ~~person, acting alone or with others, from preventing another from entering or exiting a religious facility; and generally relating to access to or egress from religious facilities~~ person from using force, threat of force, or physical obstruction to interfere with or physically injure another while the other is lawfully exercising or attempting to lawfully exercise religious beliefs at a place of religious worship; and generally relating to obstruction or interference with the exercise of religious beliefs.

~~BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
Article – Criminal Law
Section 10-204 and 10-302
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)~~

BY adding to
Article – Criminal Law
Section 10-204.1
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Criminal Law

~~10-204.~~

~~(a) (1) In this section the following words have the meanings indicated.~~

~~(2) (i) “Medical facility” means:~~

- ~~1. a facility as defined in § 10-101 of the Health – General Article; or~~
- ~~2. a health care facility as defined in § 19-114 of the Health – General Article.~~

~~(ii) "Medical facility" includes an agency, clinic, or office operated under the direction of the local health officer or under the regulatory authority of the Maryland Department of Health.~~

~~(b) (1) This section does not apply to:~~

~~(i) the chief executive officer of the medical facility;~~

~~(ii) a designee of the chief executive officer of the medical facility;~~

~~(iii) an agent of the medical facility; or~~

~~(iv) a law enforcement officer.~~

~~(2) This section does not prohibit:~~

~~(i) speech; or~~

~~(ii) picketing in connection with a labor dispute as defined in § 4-301 of the Labor and Employment Article.~~

~~(c) A person may not intentionally act, alone or with others, to prevent another from entering or exiting a medical facility by physically:~~

~~(1) detaining the other; or~~

~~(2) obstructing, impeding, or hindering the other's passage.~~

~~(d) A person who violates this section is guilty of a misdemeanor and on conviction is subject to imprisonment not exceeding 90 days or a fine not exceeding \$1,000 or both.~~

~~10-204.1.~~

~~(A) (1) IN THIS SECTION, "RELIGIOUS FACILITY" MEANS REAL PROPERTY THAT IS OWNED, LEASED, OR USED BY A RELIGIOUS ENTITY OR FOR ANY RELIGIOUS PURPOSE.~~

~~(2) "RELIGIOUS FACILITY" INCLUDES:~~

~~(I) A PLACE OF WORSHIP;~~

~~(II) A CEMETERY;~~

~~(III) A RELIGIOUS SCHOOL, EDUCATIONAL FACILITY, OR COMMUNITY CENTER; AND~~

~~(IV) THE GROUNDS ADJACENT TO THEM.~~

~~(B) (1) THIS SECTION DOES NOT APPLY TO:~~

~~(I) THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE RELIGIOUS FACILITY;~~

~~(II) A DESIGNEE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE RELIGIOUS FACILITY;~~

~~(III) AN AGENT OF THE RELIGIOUS FACILITY; OR~~

~~(IV) A LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER.~~

~~(2) THIS SECTION DOES NOT PROHIBIT SPEECH.~~

~~(C) A PERSON MAY NOT INTENTIONALLY ACT, ALONE OR WITH OTHERS, TO PREVENT ANOTHER FROM ENTERING OR EXITING A RELIGIOUS FACILITY BY PHYSICALLY:~~

~~(1) DETAINING THE OTHER; OR~~

~~(2) OBSTRUCTING, IMPEDING, OR HINDERING THE OTHER'S PASSAGE.~~

~~(D) A PERSON WHO VIOLATES THIS SECTION IS GUILTY OF A MISDEMEANOR AND ON CONVICTION IS SUBJECT TO IMPRISONMENT NOT EXCEEDING 90 DAYS OR A FINE NOT EXCEEDING \$1,000 OR BOTH.~~

~~10-302.~~

~~A person may not deface, damage, or destroy, or attempt or threaten to deface, damage, or destroy, personal or real property that is owned, leased, or used by a religious entity or for any religious purpose including:~~

~~(1) a place of worship;~~

~~(2) a cemetery;~~

~~(3) a religious school, educational facility, or community center; and~~

~~(4) the grounds adjacent to them.~~

10-204.1.

(A) A PERSON MAY NOT USE FORCE, THREAT OF FORCE, OR PHYSICAL OBSTRUCTION TO INTERFERE WITH OR PHYSICALLY INJURE ANOTHER WHILE THE OTHER IS LAWFULLY EXERCISING OR ATTEMPTING TO LAWFULLY EXERCISE THE RIGHT OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM UNDER THE FIRST AMENDMENT OF THE U.S. CONSTITUTION AT A PLACE OF RELIGIOUS WORSHIP.

(B) A PERSON WHO VIOLATES THIS SECTION IS GUILTY OF A MISDEMEANOR AND ON CONVICTION IS SUBJECT TO IMPRISONMENT NOT EXCEEDING 90 DAYS OR A FINE NOT EXCEEDING \$1,000 OR BOTH.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2026.

Approved by the Governor, May 12, 2026.