



SENATE EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL 534

GENERAL PROVISIONS – FULL-YEAR DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME

TESTIMONY OF AVI LENCZ

COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR, AGUDATH ISRAEL OF MARYLAND

OPPOSE

Agudath Israel of Maryland speaks on behalf of the Orthodox Jewish communities across Maryland and on behalf of the 10,000 students attending 30 Jewish day schools in our great state.

Understandably, many are fed up with having to change our clocks twice a year. While in and of themselves we do not oppose "locking the clock" and eliminating seasonal time adjustments, we would like to voice concern about this bill and our opposition to the selection of Daylight Savings Time as the permanent, year-round choice.

Eliminating Standard Time would detrimentally impact our community schools and their many students. While scientific study after scientific study emphasizes the importance of adequate sleep for children and adolescents, SB-534 would force our students to wake up far before dawn, impeding their sleep patterns and negatively impacting their learning readiness and physical and emotional health. Early school commutes before daylight would increase the likelihood of accidents, as well as force students to freeze during the winter as they wait for the school bus or as they walk to school. Additionally, this bill would put even more strain on our teachers, who would have less time to prepare their lessons before class.

But beyond school-related concerns, we would like to emphasize the deleterious impact this bill would have on the Orthodox Jewish communities of Maryland because of the requirements of our faith. Our morning services, rituals, and prayers, required of all adults of our faith, are time-based. For instance, the Shema prayer, a statement and affirmation of our acceptance of G-d and His Kingship that serves as one of the centerpieces of the morning service, must be recited after dawn but before mid-morning. The Amidah prayer, a selection of blessings and supplications first recited by each individual and then repeated aloud by the prayer leader, is to be said after sunrise.

If Daylight Savings Time was to be instituted year-round, services in the winter months would not be able to start before 8, even 8:30 in the morning. As the services take between forty minutes to an hour, this would place a severe burden on members of our faith, forcing them to make the horrible choice between observance of the morning services and coming to work on time. Employers would look for any excuse to avoid hiring members of our community. Faced with shrinking opportunities, people would be forced to sacrifice their livelihoods, be false to their beliefs, or relocate.

While we do not oppose adoption of Standard Time, the adoption of Daylight Savings Time year-round would create a very difficult environment for many Marylanders. We ask you to help our state maintain its well-deserved reputation for hospitality to members of all faiths and beliefs, and report unfavorably on Senate Bill 534.