



**Unfavorable
HB 181**

Declaration of Rights - Religious Freedom, Religious Tests, and Oaths and Affirmations

By Laura Bogley, JD

Director of Legislation, Maryland Right to Life

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Maryland Right to Life, I strongly oppose House Bill 181 and urge your unfavorable report.

This bill is profoundly anti-American. By passing this bill, the Maryland General Assembly will be breaking its contract with the people of Maryland and the members of this Assembly will be breaking their sworn oath to defend the Constitution both of this state and of the United States.

The Constitution of the State of Maryland and the Declaration of Rights, which guarantee the free exercise of religion and prohibit the establishment of a state religion by the government, are foundational principles that limit state government in favor of the individual rights of citizens. The freedom to believe what we wish is a natural right, pre-existing and independent of government. This bill will not eliminate the influence of religion but will establish its own form of religion- SECULARISM and make the citizens of this state worship government as God.

This bill attempts to repeal existing protections in state controlling documents and law for the free exercise of religion and for conscience objectors based on religious, moral or ethical grounds. State and federal laws are necessary to ensure that the freedom of conscience is truly a protected. Without comprehensive protection, healthcare rights of conscience may be violated in various ways, such as harassment, demotion, salary reduction, transfer, termination, loss of staffing privileges, denial of aid or benefits, and refusal to license or refusal to certify.

A unique human life begins at the moment of conception, with the joining of female and male gametes. Many Americans including physicians, health care workers, insurance providers and employers, for moral or religious reasons, do not want to participate in any process that results in the termination of human life, including abortion, In Vitro Fertilization, embryonic or fetal tissue research, healthcare rationing, assisted suicide or euthanasia.

Protecting freedom of religion and conscience is common sense. Conscience protections do not ban any procedure or prescription and do not mandate any particular belief or morality. Freedom of conscience simply provides American men and women the guarantees that this country was built upon: the right to be free from coercion. Protecting conscience helps ensure that healthcare providers enter and remain in their professions, helping to meet the rising demand for quality health care.

For these reasons we strongly object to this legislation and urge your unfavorable report.