

Christine Hunt and Jay Crouthers
1014 Dockser Drive
Crownsville, MD 21032

March 6, 2023

Maryland General Assembly
Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee
Annapolis, MD

RE: HB 871 - Declaration of Rights – Religious Freedom, Religious Tests, and Oaths and Affirmations

Dear Delegates,

We oppose HB 871 and respectfully request that you vote against it.

We are against any verbiage that limits or eliminates content about laws of morality. We feel that people, particularly those who are serving on a jury or in a government position, needs to have a moral compass and an oath that promotes and expects that of those who serve the public is essential.

In Section 1, Article 36, we also oppose the removal of the statement beginning on line 25:
Nothing shall prohibit or require the making reference to belief in, reliance upon, or invoking the aid of God or a Supreme Being in any governmental or public document, proceeding, activity, ceremony, school, institution, or place.

The majority of citizens believe in some form of higher power whether they call it God, Source Energy, Higher Power, Supreme Being etc. We feel that including reference to a higher power is important to include in the documents cited. These beliefs help to hold people accountable to not only themselves but to that higher power, thereby ensuring that morals are upheld and practiced regularly – in their personal and professional lives.

Section 1, Article 39 in general says that a person of the same religious persuasion, profession or denomination administer the oath and, in this bill, it is recommended to be omitted entirely. Perhaps this could be modified so that whomever administers the oath be either Christian, Jewish or a representative of a practice that the person taking the oath supports. It could also be up to them if they wanted such a representative at all. But to eliminate the opportunity for them to have such a person administer an oath is a breach of rights and freedoms.

God is being pushed out of our country as a whole and we want it to be a viable part of our lives and expect the State and Local government to support and maintain inclusion of religious and moral ethics.

Please vote against it.

Sincerely,

Christine Hunt and Jay Crouthers