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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
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HB 1041

**Criminal Law – Hate Crimes – Religion and Disability**

**Support**

HB1041 seeks to enhance Maryland's hate crime statute by referencing the definition of disability and incorporating the word “religion” into its provisions. The law is ambiguous because there are multiple conflicting definitions of “disability” in the code and in federal law and this makes clear the concise definition from the State Government's Article Section 20-601, thereby ensuring a comprehensive statewide understanding of disability in the context of hate crimes.

Furthermore, the inclusion of “religion” acknowledges the distinction between being targeted for one's faith versus their perceived affiliation. This differentiation is crucial as it protects individuals targeted based on their perceived religious affiliation, regardless of their religious practices. For example, a Jewish individual, born into the Jewish faith and possessing physical features commonly associated with Judaism, may be subjected to attacks based on their religion despite not actively practicing or explicitly stating their religious beliefs. By addressing these gaps in the law, Maryland reaffirms its commitment to safeguarding the rights of all citizens against hate-motivated violence, thereby promoting inclusivity, equity, and justice.

