



Secular Maryland

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February 06, 2025

**SB 24 - FAV**

Annotated Code - Terminology - Clergy and Churches, Faith Institutions, and Places of Worship

Dear Chair Brian J. Feldman, Vice-Chair Cheryl C. Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

This bill eliminates sectarian language in our laws by replacing “church” with either “faith institution” or “place of worship” and replacing “clergyman” with “member of the clergy”. For the same reasons Christians would dislike our laws referring to their house of worship or faith institutions as a “mosque”, non-Christians dislike our laws referring to their house of worship or faith institutions as a “church”. The etymology of the word church is from old English cirice, circe meaning “place of assemblage set aside for Christian worship; the body of Christian believers, Christians collectively; ecclesiastical authority or power”. The extensive use of the Christian word “church”, along with occasional clumsy addition of phrases such as “or synagogue”, “or other”, “or religious denomination”, “of any denomination”, etc., when actually referring to either a faith institution or a house of worship in our laws, is simultaneously confusing and snobbish. Secular Maryland thanks Senator Keagan for sponsoring this bill and calls on all members of this General Assembly to promptly and unanimously enact this long overdue and common sense rewording of our laws.

Maybe in the future we can go one step further and modify our laws so that both religious and secular institutions and citizens are treated the same and there is no longer a need to repeatedly single out members of clergy, houses of worship, and faith institutions in our laws.

Respectfully,  
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