

**sb 24 def pf place of worship.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ken Phelps Jr

Position: FAV



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB0024:  
Annotated Code—Terminology—Clergy and Churches, Faith  
Institutions, and Places of Worship  
\*\*FAVORABLE\*\***

TO: Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair, Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair and the members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

FROM: Rev. Linda K. Boyd, Co-Chair, Maryland Episcopal Public Policy Network, Diocese of Maryland

DATE: February 6, 2025

This Bill is long overdue. It recognizes that our concept of places of worship and faith traditions is out-moded and needs to be expanded. We need to recognize and respect all faith traditions, including Judaism, Islam, etc. This Bill recognizes that our laws need to reflect our society and be ecumenical with regard to the idea of what constitutes a faith tradition and a place of worship.

The Episcopal Diocese of Maryland urges a favorable report.

**SB0024\_FAV\_mgoldstein 2025.pdf**

Uploaded by: Mathew Goldstein

Position: FAV



Secular Maryland

<https://secularmaryland.dorik.io> [secularmaryland@tutanota.com](mailto:secularmaryland@tutanota.com)

---

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,  
Mathew Goldstein  
3838 Early Glow Ln

Bowie, MD 20716

# **BJC Fav SB24 Code church.pdf**

Uploaded by: Sarah Miicke

Position: FAV



**OFFICERS**

ROBIN WEIMAN  
President

RICHARD GRATZ

SARAH GROSSMAN

AMALIA HONICK

RABBI STEVEN SCHWARTZ

RABBI JONATHAN SEIDEMANN

MELANIE SHAPIRO

ELIZABETH GREEN  
Past President

HOWARD LIBIT  
Executive Director

**MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS**

- Adat Chaim Congregation
- American Jewish Committee
- Americans for Peace Now  
Baltimore Chapter
- American Israel Public Affairs Committee
- American Red Magen David for Israel
- American Zionist Movement
- Amit Women
- Association of Reform Zionists of America
- Baltimore Board of Rabbis
- Baltimore Hebrew Congregation
- Baltimore Jewish Green and Just Alliance
- Baltimore Men's ORT
- Baltimore Zionist District
- Beth Am Congregation
- Beth El Congregation
- Beth Israel Congregation
- Beth Shalom Congregation of  
Howard County
- Beth Tfiloh Congregation
- Bnai Brith, Chesapeake Bay Region
- Bnai Israel Congregation
- Bnai Jacob Shaarei Zion Congregation
- Bolton Street Synagogue
- Chevre Ahavas Chesed, Inc.
- Chevrei Tzedek Congregation
- Chizuk Amuno Congregation
- Congregation Beir Tikvah
- Congregation Tiferes Yisroel
- Federation of Jewish Women's  
Organizations of Maryland
- Hadassah
- Har Sinai - Oheb Shalom Congregation
- J Street
- Jewish Federation of Howard County
- Jewish Labor Committee
- Jewish War Veterans
- Jewish War Veterans, Ladies Auxiliary
- Jewish Women International
- Jews For Judaism
- Moses Montefiore Anshe Emunah  
Hebrew Congregation
- National Council of Jewish Women
- Ner Tamid Congregation
- Rabbinical Council of America
- Religious Zionists of America
- Shaarei Tfiloh Congregation
- Shomrei Emunah Congregation
- Suburban Orthodox Congregation
- Temple Beth Shalom
- Temple Isaiah
- Zionist Organization of America  
Baltimore District

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY**

**Senate Bill 24 – Annotated Code - Terminology - Clergy and Churches, Faith Institutions, and Places of Worship**

**February 6, 2025**

**Support**

**Background:** Senate Bill 24 would simply alter the terminology throughout the Annotated Code as it relates to a clergyman and churches to be more inclusive. Specifically it would change church to faith institution or place of worship and clergyman to member of the clergy.

**Written Comments:** The Baltimore Jewish Council (BJC) represents the Associated Jewish Federation of Baltimore and all its agencies, and programs, as well as the organized Jewish Community of Baltimore. We appreciate the bill sponsor bringing this important bill to our attention. Ensuring that inclusive language that is representative of all faiths is used in Maryland's code is important in showing Maryland's commitment to freedom and equality for all religions.

For these reasons we ask for a favorable report on SB24.

*The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of the Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.*

# **Testimony - Church to Faith Institution.pdf**

Uploaded by: Sen. Cheryl Kagan

Position: FAV



CHERYL C. KAGAN  
Legislative District 17  
Montgomery County

—  
*Vice Chair*  
Education, Energy, and  
the Environment Committee

—  
Joint Audit and Evaluation Committee  
Joint Committee on Federal Relations



Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Suite 2 West  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3134  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3134  
Cheryl.Kagan@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**SB24: "Faith Institutions"**

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Thursday, February 6, 2025 1:00 PM

In our increasingly diverse society, it is important that our laws reflect and respect all faith traditions. Our law books include 142 uses of the word "church," including as a stand-in for all places of worship; this is simply inaccurate and implies that other religions are less significant.

[SB24](#) would standardize the use of terms in the Maryland Code. When a house of worship or religious organization is mentioned, it would be replaced with "faith institution" (although Churchville, MD should not be referred to as "faith institution-ville":)).

This legislation also updates nine instances from the term "clergyman" to "member of the clergy" to include all religious leaders-- regardless of gender.

Standardizing this terminology corrects implicit bias towards the dominant religion and ensures that all faiths are treated with equal dignity and respect under the law.

**I urge a favorable report on SB24.**

## **SB 24**

Uploaded by: Sharon Ringley

Position: FAV



MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE  
**JEWISH  
CAUCUS**

**Executive Officers**

**MLJC Co-Chairs**

Senator Shelly Hettleman  
Delegate Jared Solomon

**MLJC Executive Board**

Delegate Jessica Feldmark  
Delegate Aaron Kaufman  
Senator Karen Lewis Young  
Delegate Ryan Spiegel

**Legislative Chair**

Delegate Anne Kaiser

**MLJC Members**

Senator Dalya Attar  
Delegate Jon Cardin  
Delegate Mark Edelson  
Senator Brian Feldman  
Senator Cheryl Kagan  
Delegate Marc Korman  
Senator Ben Kramer  
Delegate Sandy Rosenberg  
Delegate Dana Stein  
Delegate Joe Vogel  
Senator Jeff Waldstreicher  
Senator Craig Zucker

**MLJC Associate Members**

Delegate Lauren Arian  
Delegate Heather Bagnall  
Senator Pamela Beidle  
Delegate Adrian Bofo  
Delegate Bonnie Cullison  
Delegate Eric Ebersole  
Delegate Kris Fair  
Delegate Linda Foley  
Delegate David Fraser-Hidalgo  
Senator Dawn Gile  
Delegate Mike Griffith  
Senator Guy Guzzone  
Delegate Terri Hill  
Delegate Dana Jones  
Delegate Nicholas Kipke  
Delegate Jazz Lewis  
Delegate Robbyn Lewis  
Senator Sara Love  
Senator Johnny Mautz  
Delegate Susan McComas  
Delegate Bernice Mireku-North  
Delegate Ryan Nawrocki  
Delegate Julie Palakovich Carr  
Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk  
Senator Jim Rosapepe  
Delegate Matthew Schindler  
Delegate Vaughn Stewart  
Delegate Kathy Szeliga  
Delegate Chris Tomlinson  
Delegate Greg Wims

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

**FAVORABLE**

**Education, Energy and the Environment**

February 5, 2025

**SB 24 - Annotated Code – Terminology –  
Clergy and Churches, Faith Institutions, and Places of Worship**

The Maryland Legislative Jewish Caucus (MLJC), a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates, **strongly supports SB 24**, which modernizes the terminology in Maryland code to better reflect and respect the diverse reality of contemporary religious life and religious institutions in Maryland.

This legislation directly aligns with the MLJC's core mission to protect and advance civil rights and religious freedom for all. By replacing the term "church" throughout the Maryland code with the more inclusive phrase "faith institutions and places of worship," the legislation ensures that our code more accurately reflects the rich diversity of religious life in the state. The change eliminates any legal ambiguity and ensures that Jewish synagogues, Islamic mosques, Hindu temples, and all other religious institutions receive the same protections and privileges under Maryland law.

Additionally, updating the term "clergyman" to "member of the clergy" is particularly relevant to the Jewish Caucus, as many Reform, Reconstructionist, and Conservative synagogues are led by women rabbis. This change ensures that all of Maryland's religious leaders, regardless of gender, receive equal legal recognition when performing all aspects of their official duties, including performing marriages and providing pastoral care in hospitals and prisons.

Modernizing these terms signals Maryland's commitment to religious diversity and equal protection. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report.