



### **Unfavorable Statement**

#### **HB 822 - Declaration of Rights - Religious Freedom, Religious Tests, and Oaths and Affirmations**

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Executive Director, Maryland Right to Life, Inc.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Maryland Right to Life, I strongly oppose House Bill 822 and urge your unfavorable report.

#### **This bill is profoundly anti-American.**

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 in direct conflict with the people's free exercise of religion. Any elected officials who will not comport their actions to their sworn duties under the Constitution of the United States or of Maryland, are not fit to hold public office.

#### **This bill violates the Constitutional legislative oath of office.**

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. Article I, Section 9 of the Constitution of Maryland requires as stated:

**SEC. 9.** Every person elected, or appointed, to any office of profit or trust, under this Constitution, or under the Laws, made pursuant thereto, shall, before he enters upon the duties of such office, take and subscribe the following oath, or affirmation: I, \_\_\_\_\_, do swear, (or affirm, as the case may be,) that **I will support the Constitution of the United States; and that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to the State of Maryland, and support the Constitution and Laws thereof;** and that I will, to the best of my skill and judgment, diligently and faithfully, without partiality or prejudice, execute the office of \_\_\_\_\_, according to the Constitution and Laws of this State, (and, if a Governor, Senator, Member of the House of Delegates, or Judge,) that I will not directly or indirectly, receive the profits or any part of the profits of any other office during the term of my acting as \_\_\_\_\_ *(originally Article I, sec. 6, renumbered by Chapter 681, Acts of 1977, ratified Nov. 7, 1978).*

#### **This bill is an assault on religious freedom and rights of conscience throughout Maryland statute.**

This bill attempts to repeal existing protections in state controlling documents and law for the free exercise of religion and for conscientious 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.

Many physicians and other health care workers, for moral or religious reasons, do not participate in any process that results in the termination of human life, including abortion, embryonic or fetal tissue

research, healthcare rationing, assisted suicide or euthanasia. 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.

The consequence of this legislation, whether intended or unintended, will be the mass exodus of medical professionals and skilled workers from the health care industry. The bill will create widespread medical scarcity, particularly in underserved areas where people are most in need.

**Maryland was established as a sanctuary for Catholics.**

Maryland was established by Lord Baltimore as a Catholic Colony and was established to serve as a sanctuary for Catholics to practice their faith without fear of prosecution. In fact, it was the House of Delegates, who in 1649 enacted the *Maryland Act of Toleration*, to protect the religious exercise of all Christians without regard to denomination. That Act by this Assembly inspired the guarantee of religious freedoms we are owed under the Constitution of the United States, the First Amendment and the Bill of Rights.

**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 Maryland men and women the guarantees that this country was built upon. 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.**