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March 11, 2025

**HB 14/2 - UNF**

State Government - State House Trust - Ten Commandments Monument Display Act

Dear Chair Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Vice-Chair Bonnie Cullison, and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

Government neutrality via institutional level silence demonstrates a commitment to avoid bias and practice non-discriminatory neutrality when enacting and enforcing laws and providing civic services. Examples of improperly biased government sponsored displays in Maryland include the state of Maryland Bladensburg war memorial crucifixion cross and the Allegany County granite Ten Commandments display. When the government initiates an effort to place a Ten Commandments monument in public view, with a selective summary of various commands found in “holy” bibles that are claimed to have been authored by the one and only god, and that are claimed to have been provided by that god to the Hebrews somewhere in the Middle East several thousands of years ago, including commands to have no other gods before Me, not make idols, not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, and to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, a particular religious objective is unmistakable.

Secular Maryland respectfully requests that such Christian and monotheistic biblical displays and crucifixion crosses be removed from government property. This is not a judgement on the value of religions or on believers anymore than government maintaining neutrality between competing political parties or between competing commercial businesses is a judgement against political parties or commercial enterprises. The importance of religion to believers is respected absent government expressing support or opposition. Religion being both personal and communal, the government should avoid using its authority to try to influence an individual's or community's decision regarding religious beliefs.

Government should not promote or affiliate itself with any religious doctrine or organization, should not discriminate among persons on the basis of their religious beliefs and practices, should not delegate a governmental power to a religious institution, and should not involve itself too deeply in such an institution's affairs. Government should not set up a church, pass laws which aid one religion, aid all

religions, or prefer one religion over another, or force or influence a person to go to, or remain away from church, or request that he profess any religious belief or disbelief, or disadvantage any person for entertaining or professing religious beliefs or disbeliefs, for church attendance or non-attendance, nor impose a tax in any amount, large or small, to support any religious activities or institutions.

We are entitled to governmental neutrality both among religions and between religion and non-religion with equal respect for the conscience of the dissenter, the atheist, and the adherent of a non-Christian faith such as Islam or Hinduism. All governmental actions should have a secular purpose, avoid having a goal of advancing or inhibiting religion, and not result in excessive entanglement between church and state. Please reject this bill.

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Respectfully,  
Mathew Goldstein  
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