



# THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MARYLAND

The Maryland Episcopal  
Public Policy  
Network

**FAVORABLE HB822**

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

**TO: Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair, Delegate Bonnie Cullison, Vice  
Chair and the members of the House Health and Government Operations  
Committee**

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

**DATE: March 4, 2023**

The Episcopal Church has endorsed Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the landmark declaration of international law and human rights that expressly protects the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and states as follows: *Article 18*. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

This is consistent with the First Amendment of the United States Constitution and Article 36 of the Maryland Declaration of Rights. According to cases decided pursuant to the First Amendment, that freedom includes the right not to believe in God. We believe that people of every faith tradition should be able to worship as they see fit. We expressly endorse that freedom as also meaning that a person has an unalienable right not to believe in God.

**We strongly request a favorable report.**

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