

HB0822\_RichardKaplowitz\_FAV  
03/04/2025  
Richard Keith Kaplowitz  
Frederick, MD 21703-7134

**TESTIMONY ON HB#0822 - POSITION: FAVORABLE**  
**Declaration of Rights - Religious Freedom, Religious Tests, and Oaths and Affirmations**

**TO:** Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee

**FROM:** Richard Keith Kaplowitz

**My name is Richard Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of/ HB#/0822, Declaration of Rights - Religious Freedom, Religious Tests, and Oaths and Affirmations**

The Freedom Forum has traced the history and meaning of religious freedom as considered by the Founding Fathers when drafting the Bill of Rights in the United States Constitution.

The founders disagreed about the exact meaning of "no establishment" under the First Amendment, and those arguments continue today. But ultimately, preventing government from interfering with religion is an essential principle of religious liberty. Without separating church from state, true religious freedom is impossible.

Allowing one religious group preferential access or power can lead to a polarizing and contentious environment where "We the People" applies only to those in the majority at any given moment. Government support of religion puts some people's rights and beliefs over those of others. In the worst cases, it can require everyone — believers and nonbelievers alike — to jeopardize their beliefs to get equal treatment under the law. The idea of separation of church and state ensures the government cannot exercise undue influence over Americans' spiritual and religious lives. From ending [school-mandated prayer](#) to banning the government from coercing Americans to participate in religious activities, the wall of separation has been an essential tool in building a freer democracy. And this uniquely American approach has resulted in one of the most religiously diverse nations in history.

The intent of this bill is simple, it is to make any requirement of inclusion of a belief in a deity no longer applicable in laws and declarations within Maryland. It echoes Article VI, Clause 3 of the United States Constitution's statement that "...no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States." to be affirmatively applied within Maryland.

The bill will accomplish this goal by altering and removing references requiring a belief in G-d from certain provisions relating to religious freedom, religious tests, and oaths and affirmations. If we are to respect each individual in Maryland in their religious belief or nonbelief in a deity, this bill will make that effective in Maryland.

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**I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB0822.**