



TESTIMONY TO THE HEALTH AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

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

POSITION: Support

BY: Linda Kohn, President

DATE: March 4, 2025

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes in the individual liberties guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States. The League is convinced that individual rights now protected by the Constitution should not be weakened or abridged.

The protection of individual liberties, including the right to religious liberty and the separation of church and state, is a long-standing, central League Principle. The League of Women Voters of Maryland thus supports House Bill 822, which seeks to amend the State Constitution by ballot initiative at the next general election to prohibit religious tests for public officeholders, and for those required to take oaths and attestations when called to serve as witnesses and jurors.

Article VI of the United States Constitution states **“No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States.”** Article 39 of the Maryland Constitution is in clear violation of the U.S. Constitution, as it requires that all oaths and affirmations must confirm “the attestation of the Divine Being.” Articles 36 and 37 of our State Constitution contain similar unconstitutional language.

Maryland is a welcoming home for people of all ethnicities, backgrounds, and religions, including those without religious belief. Our State Constitution should reflect and respect this diversity, and protect the individual liberties of our residents, including the right to religious freedom as set forth so clearly in the United States Constitution.

The League of Women Voters of Maryland urges a favorable report on House Bill 822.