



Testimony in Opposition to HB1472

**STATE GOVERNMENT—STATE HOUSE TRUST-TEN COMMANDMENTS
MONUMENT DISPLAY ACT**

**** Unfavorable ****

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

From: Rev. Linda K. Boyd, co-chair, and Rev. Margaret VanAuker, member, Maryland Episcopal Public Policy Network, Diocese of Maryland

Date: March 11, 2025

The First Amendment of the Bill of Rights and Article 36 of the Maryland Declaration of Rights both preserve the freedom of religion. Both were deemed important to the new colonists after they fled the violence and horrors of religions fighting each other in Europe. Both essentially say that the government cannot make laws that set up a religion and/or have the appearance of supporting a religion. This Bill states that the State will erect a monument and display the Ten Commandments on it. This violates the establishment clause of the First Amendment because it might appear that the State is supporting one religion over another. In McCreary County v. American Civil Liberties Union (2005), the U.S. Supreme Court said that putting framed copies of the Ten Commandments in two Kentucky courthouses was not allowed. It decided this because the main purpose seemed to be promoting religion, which goes against the First Amendment's rule that the government cannot establish an official religion. The court also said that showing the Ten Commandments is usually seen as religious unless there's a clear nonreligious reason for it. Recently, on Nov. 12, 2024, a federal judge ruled that Louisiana's law requiring the Ten Commandments in classrooms violates the First Amendment and blocked its enforcement.

The Episcopal Church objects to this Bill because it would violate the First Amendment and the Maryland Declaration of Rights. Each person, each child of God, deserves to be free to worship as they choose.

We respectfully request an unfavorable vote on HB1472.