



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

January 30, 2025

The Maryland State Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
2 East Miller Senate Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Senate Bill 287: *Criminal Law - Interference With Access to or Egress From a Religious Facility - Prohibition*

Dear Chairman Smith and Members of the Committee,

A sad reality of our time is that there has been an uptick in anti-religious extremism, regardless of faith. I believe this Committee and those watching this hearing would agree that Marylanders should not have to fear for their safety or property whenever they go to worship. They should have free and safe access to their chosen religious facilities. At the same time, religious facilities should have the right to exclude from their premises people who are regarded as threats.

Senate Bill 287 simply adopts the same prohibitions and punishments the State has for preventing access or egress for a medical facility (as defined in Section 10-204 of the Criminal Law Article) to religious facilities. The bill defines religious facilities as a place of worship, a cemetery, religious school, educational or community facility, and the grounds adjacent to them.

The operative language of SB 287 states that a person may not intentionally act, alone or with others, to prevent another person from entering or exiting a religious facility by physically detaining the other or obstructing, impeding or hindering the other's passage. The bill explicitly excludes the CEO of the religious facility or the CEO's designee or an agent of the religious facility or a law enforcement officer.

Anyone who violates the law will be guilty of a misdemeanor and fined up to \$1,000.

I appreciate the Committee's consideration of Senate Bill 287 and will be happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.