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MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE

**JEWISH
CAUCUS**

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

FAVORABLE

HB305 - Criminal Law – Interference With Access to or Egress From a Religious Facility – Prohibition

Judiciary

February 11, 2025

The Maryland Legislative Jewish Caucus (MLJC), a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates, strongly supports HB 305, which creates a misdemeanor offense for blocking access to religious facilities, similar to existing laws that protect access to medical facilities.

This legislation, which clearly aligns with MLJC's mission of promoting religious freedom, has been proposed at a critical time. Given the documented rise in antisemitic incidents at Jewish institutions, this legislation provides additional legal tools to protect the ability to safely enter and exit synagogues, Jewish schools, community centers, and cemeteries. While the bill applies to all religious facilities regardless of faith, Jewish institutions have historically been targets of harassment and obstruction.

HB 305 balances the need to protect speech rights while addressing physical access issues. Peaceful protest is protected while providing recourse against those who block access. This is a narrow but concrete protection for basic physical access to religious spaces and signals Maryland's continued commitment to religious freedom.

For these reasons, we request a favorable report.