



**Testimony in OPPOSITION of  
House Bill 1395: County Boards of Education – Volunteer Aides – School Chaplain**

**Ways and Means Committee**

**Position: Unfavorable**

March 6, 2025

Strong Schools Maryland is a network of education advocates dedicated to ensuring the full funding and faithful implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. We advocate, build power, and share resources with invested Maryland residents to co-create strong public schools. **Strong Schools Maryland stands in opposition to House Bill 1395**, which authorizes each county board of education to use chaplains as volunteer aides in schools to provide support services to students.

With the passage of the Blueprint, Maryland committed to hiring diverse and highly qualified teachers and administrators, recognizing that the state is growing increasingly diverse. This diversity includes but is not limited to race, religion and spiritual beliefs. Allowing chaplains as volunteer aides would not serve our diverse student population, and could potentially cause harm to certain student groups. Simply put, this bill violates the fundamental tenet of separation of church and state. The separation of church and state is a fundamental component of our public systems, and now more than ever we must work to protect this foundation in the current educational landscape.

**House Bill 1395:**

- Fails to recognize the growing population of students of diverse faiths, particularly religious minorities. The proposed legislation offers no guidance about what a chaplain could or could not say to a student, specifically about religion – there is no requirement in this law that the chaplains refrain from proselytizing while at schools or that they serve students from different religious background; and
- Asserts government authority over the spiritual development and formation of our public school children. Spiritual and religious care must be provided with consent. Chaplains serving in public schools are likely to bring about conflict with the religious beliefs of families and other communities.

Chaplains often are strong pillars of Maryland communities and students will continue to have access to the services and resources they provide, outside of school.

**For these reasons, we strongly urge an unfavorable report on House Bill 1395.**

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