



To: Ways and Means Committee

Re: HB 1395 School Chaplaincy

3/6/2025

Dear Committee,

We want to express some concerns about HB 1395 as currently written.

There is a big difference between the work of a clergy person and that of a chaplain. A clergy person brings their religious perspective into their interaction with clients. A chaplain is trained to respect the tradition of their client.

To become a chaplain requires specialized training, usually in addition to ordination or a master's degree in divinity or equivalent. A Board-Certified Chaplain 400 hours of education in addition to 1200 hours of clinical experience.

Many denominations can "call" a pastor without an advanced degree and in some cases not even requiring a bachelor's degree. That may be appropriate for the congregation but doesn't provide someone with the background to provide specialty chaplaincy care to school children and teens in turmoil or crisis.

In our program, under the auspices of the College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy, Chaplains receive professional training from an accredited school of Clinical Pastoral Education using the insights and principles of psychotherapy, religion, spirituality, and theology to aid patients and families in accepting their current situations.

We would want to see serious vetting of chaplains that we send into our school. Specifically, verified credentials from a recognized Clinical Pastoral Education program including a minimum of 2-4 Units of Clinical Pastoral Education.

Further, anyone who is volunteering as a chaplain in our schools should undergo a thorough background check before having access to Maryland's vulnerable children.

Thank you,

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