



SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

APRIL 1, 2026

HOUSE BILL 649

**ADVANCING EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL STUDENTS IN
MARYLAND**

OPPOSE

Agudath Israel of Maryland, the Mid-Atlantic regional office of Agudath Israel of America, a renowned national Jewish advocacy organization with chapters across the country, speaks on behalf of the Orthodox Jewish communities across Maryland and on the behalf of the many Jewish schools and students within our state. We stand today in opposition to House Bill 649.

HB 649 is a bill aimed in part at preventing discrimination in the educational sector by authorizing the Commission on Civil Rights to enforce related prohibitions and establishing a private cause of action therein. It is concerning to note that this bill ignores the extensive, good-faith discussion and advocacy in 2022, with concern to [HB 850/CH 739](#) of that year's session. As a result of those discussions, the bill that passed into law ensured that discrimination would rightfully be prevented while protecting the independence of nonpublic schools, and ensuring that they would not be pressured to adopt policies in conflict with their religious or moral teachings.

Our schools have strict policies ensuring that the rights of students and parents are respected, while preserving their religious character and ensuring that the schools remain true to our faith and its teachings. It is deeply disappointing that the previous agreement is now being revisited.

We are deeply concerned by the idea that our schools will now have their decisions judged by a State commission that will not understand and appreciate the religious considerations of our faith. We are further concerned that this legislation will open the door to disaffected parents or students to pursue lengthy legal action against a school that could impose significant financial and/or reputational costs on the school even if the ultimate accusation is found to be baseless.

The ability of our schools to transmit our religious teachings and values is of the utmost importance to our faith. We submit that the policies signed into law in 2022 should be respected and preserved as the standard, and we respectfully urge an unfavorable report on House Bill 649.