



SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL 939

CERTIFICATES OF BIRTH - FILING - TIME PERIOD

MARCH 26, 2026

SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

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, families, and parents across Maryland. We speak today in support of House Bill 939.

House Bill 939 would change the period of time required for the completion and submission of a birth certificate with the Maryland Department of Health following the birth of a child. Currently, Maryland requires the submission within five days; HB 939 would change this.

This issue has particular relevance to Orthodox Jewish families. Per Jewish custom, rather than being named immediately upon birth, Jewish children generally receive their names several days after the birth. For boys, the name is traditionally announced as part of the circumcision ceremony eight days after the birth, while for girls the name is traditionally announced as part of synagogue services and in conjunction with the Torah reading, which in many instances may also take place more than five days after the birth. Allowing parents additional time would mitigate this issue.

The current requirement to submit the birth certificate, with the name of the child, within that time frame forces parents to finalize a name choice before their preferred time, rather than save the revealing of the name for the religious ceremony as is customary. Additionally, when the naming of the child carries special significance, such as in cases where the name will be in honor of a deceased relative, the five-day requirement can, and in many cases does, exacerbate internal family conflict. In some cases, parents may choose to submit a birth certificate without a name, and are then forced to go through the burden of submitting a second birth certificate once the name has been finalized and announced at the ceremony.

House Bill 939 would remove that stress by allowing parents to register the birth, with the chosen name, after the religious ceremony is concluded. We therefore respectfully request that you issue a favorable report on House Bill 939.

AMENDMENT TO HOUSE BILL 939

On Page 3, beginning on line 4:

(G) AT THE REQUEST OF THE PARENT(S) WITHIN 5 CALENDAR DAYS AFTER A BIRTH OCCURS, THE PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR FILING A BIRTH CERTIFICATE MAY DELAY THE FILING OF THE CERTIFICATE. THE DELAYED CERTIFICATE SHALL BE FILED WITHIN 10 CALENDAR DAYS AFTER THE BIRTH OCCURS.

(i) THE PARENT'S REQUEST SHALL BE ON THE FORM THAT THE SECRETARY PROVIDES.