

OPPOSE HB356

Honorable Chair Wells and members of the committee,

As someone who believes that religious freedom is one of the most fundamental rights we have, I am very concerned about HB 356. Maryland's Constitution already provides strong, clear protections for religious exercise, protections that have safeguarded people of every faith for generations. By redefining terms like "substantial burden" and "compelling governmental interest," this bill risks narrowing those constitutional guarantees.

I am especially troubled that HB 356 explicitly includes "a substantial threat to public health" as a compelling governmental interest. That language creates a direct legal pathway for the state to justify burdens on religious practice whenever it asserts a public-health rationale. For those of us who rely on the Constitution's broad and time-tested protections, this shift is alarming. It could make it easier for the government to override sincere religious convictions in the future.

Maryland does not need this bill. Our Constitution already protects religious liberty more strongly than any statute could. I respectfully urge you to oppose HB 356 and preserve the robust protections that have long defended the rights of people of all faiths.

Please vote unfavorably.

Mark Meyerovich
District 15