

UNFAVORABLE

HB0067 - State Government - State House Trust - Ten Commandments Monument Display Act

February 13, 2026

Chair Wells, Vice-Chair Kerr, and Members of the Committee.

I respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to HB0067, which would require the placement of a Ten Commandments monument on the grounds of the Maryland State House. This bill is a direct violation of the separation of church and state and has no place in a government building that represents all Marylanders.

The Ten Commandments are a distinctly religious document, not a secular basis for United States law. While some argue they have historical significance, their primary function is and always has been theological. The few commandments which are secular (don't steal, don't kill) are common to every civilized society regardless of religious traditions in the country. To place them on the grounds of the State House sends a clear, exclusionary message: that the government endorses this specific religious text over others. This alienates non-believers and members of minority faiths, suggesting they are second-class citizens in their own state.

Furthermore, the text itself is not standardized. Different religious sects—Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish traditions—number and phrase the commandments differently. By choosing one version for a state monument, the government is inevitably taking sides in a theological debate, validating one denomination's interpretation while rejecting others. This is precisely the type of entanglement the Establishment Clause sought to ban.

Most critically, the First Commandment—"Thou shalt have no other gods before me"—is in direct conflict with the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which guarantees the right to freedom of religion (including the right to have other gods, or no god at all). It is constitutionally incoherent for the State of Maryland to erect a monument commanding religious allegiance while simultaneously upholding a Constitution that forbids the government from doing exactly that.

The 1971 Supreme Court case *Lemon v Kurtzman*, established the "Lemon test", to determine if government actions had a secular purpose, did not advance or inhibit religion, and did not create excessive entanglement. Our laws are based on secular principles of justice and equality, not for the purpose of taking sides on ancient religious edicts. I urge you to vote UNFAVORABLE on HB0067.

Sincerely,

Daniel Meyer, District 10

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel Meyer", with a stylized flourish at the end.