

HB0356_RichardKaplowitz_FAV
02/17/2026
Richard Keith Kaplowitz
Frederick, MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON HB#/0356 - FAVORABLE
Human Relations - Protection of the Free Exercise of Religion

TO: Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr, and members of the Government, Labor and Elections Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard K. Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#0356, **Human Relations - Protection of the Free Exercise of Religion**

The framers of the U.S. Constitution and the people of this State, recognizing free exercise of religion as an inalienable right, secured its protection in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and in Article 36 of the Declaration of Rights of the Maryland Constitution.

In *City of Boerne v. Flores*, the U.S. Supreme Court held that the compelling interest test provided for in the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act to protect the inalienable constitutional right of free exercise of religion must be adopted by a state through legislative act or court decision in order to apply to state or local government action.

The Senate of Maryland and the Maryland House of Delegates have determined that the same compelling interest test provided for in the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act applies to the State and local governments in Maryland.

This bill will follow the mandate to adopt the decision of the *City of Boerne v Flores* by the United States Supreme Court to be applicable in Maryland.

It will accomplish that aim by prohibiting a governmental authority, under certain circumstances, from burdening a person's exercise of religion; and authorizing a person aggrieved by a violation of the Act to obtain certain relief in a civil action.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB#0356.