



**HOUSE HEALTH COMMITTEE
MARCH 10, 2026
HOUSE BILL 1402**

**MEDICAL EXAMINER - RELEASE OF BODY - REQUIREMENTS FOR MUSLIMS
SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS**

Agudath Israel of Maryland, the Mid-Atlantic regional office for 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. Our organization has long worked with the State of Maryland to ensure that the protocols in place are cognizant of, and sensitive to, the religious concerns of Jews, Muslims, Native Americans, and other traditions which regulate the burial of the deceased. Since 2008, Rabbi Ariel Sadwin, the executive director of Agudath Israel of Maryland, has served as the community liaison to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, representing the needs and sensitivities of the Jewish community and other faith and cultural communities. We are grateful for the cooperation and sensitivity shown by the State of Maryland.

In the Jewish tradition, the treatment of the body of a deceased person must be treated with deep respect. Jewish law and custom requires the immediate burial of the entire body (including internal organs, blood, and tissue), while unnecessary invasive procedures is seen as a desecration. For these reasons, autopsy is forbidden by Jewish law except in certain extenuating circumstances (such as criminal investigations or public health emergencies). The requirement for speedy burial is made explicit in Deuteronomy 21:22-23: ““If a man will commit a sin deserving of the punishment of death, and he is put to death and hung on the gallows. You shall not leave his corpse on the gallows overnight, for you shall surely bury him on that day, for a hanged [corpse] is an affront to G-d, and you shall not defile your land which G-d has given you as an inheritance,” and is further developed by Talmudic law. We therefore support legislation that would result in speedy release of the bodies of deceased individuals, so that they may be properly buried with proper alacrity.

In light of the fact that many faith traditions, including but not limited to the Muslim tradition, require speedy burial, we respectfully ask that House Bill 1402 provide that decedents of faith traditions which mandate immediate burial of their decedents, per the receipt of notice as provided by this bill, be released within 48 hours after the completion of the autopsy. We therefore ask for a favorable report on House Bill 1402, as amended to provide for the decedents of all faith traditions which mandate immediate burial.

Thank you.