



SENATE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE

JANUARY 20, 2026

SENATE BILL 177

CRIMINAL LAW - INTERFERENCE WITH ACCESS TO OR EGRESS FROM A RELIGIOUS FACILITY - PROHIBITION

FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENT

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 across Maryland and on the behalf of the many (+60) Orthodox synagogues within our state, as well as the many other religious facilities utilized by our faith community. We stand today in support of Senate Bill 177, with amendments.

SB 177 would prohibit a person or persons from impeding others from entering or exiting a religious facility, including places of worship, cemeteries, and religious educational facilities. The need to ensure that people of faith are able to worship without fear and without harassment is clear. In recent years, members of the Jewish faith have seen politically-motivated and antisemitic protesters target synagogues, barring people from being able to safely enter and exit as well as creating an atmosphere of intimidation and fear. While freedom of speech allows for peaceful protests regardless of ideological content, there is no right to impede others from utilizing places of worship.

In order to best advance the goals of this bill, we urge slightly amending the bill to ensure that religious facilities retain their ability to regulate activity within their grounds while protecting the rights of worshippers. We trust that the amendments below preserve the intent and aims of SB 177, and thus respectfully ask that you issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 177, as amended.

Thank you.

Amendments to Senate Bill 177

Amendment No. 1

On page 3, line 6, strike “CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER” and insert “PERSON IN CHARGE”

Amendment No. 2

On page 3, line 8, strike “CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER” and insert “PERSON IN CHARGE”

Amendment No. 3

On page 3, line 10, after “FACILITY”, insert “OR OTHER PERSON AUTHORIZED BY THE RELIGIOUS FACILITY, OR OTHERWISE ACTING IN GOOD FAITH ON ITS BEHALF TO PROTECT THE RELIGIOUS FACILITY OR ITS ACTIVITIES”

Amendment No. 4

On page 3, line 13, insert “(3) A RELIGIOUS FACILITY RETAINS THE SOLE DISCRETION TO DETERMINE WHO MAY BE ON ITS PREMISES, AS DETERMINED BY THE INTERNAL DICTATES OF THAT RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION.”