



March 16, 2021

The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass
Health and Government Operations Committee
House Office Building, room 241
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS HB0157 (SB0421) Indigenous Peoples' Day - Rule of Interpretation and Replacement of Columbus Day

Chairwoman and Members of the Committee:

The Secular Coalition for Maryland favors changes to Commercial Law §14–301, Financial Institutions §5–705, and General Provisions §1–111, all of which are consistent with the changes being made to those provisions by this bill. The goal of these proposed changes is to remove unnecessary references that appear to favor some religious viewpoints over competing viewpoints. There is a tendency for such religiously biased references to favor majority viewpoints, specifically theism, monotheism, and Christianity, over minority viewpoints, such as atheism, polytheism, and non-Christian religions. And that is what we find in these sections of our laws.

Commercial Law §14–301(b) says “Business day” means any calendar day except Sunday or the following ...’ should be shortened to “Business day” means the following ...’. This law could also be modified to say that there are to be no more than six business days per week with each business deciding which day of each week they will close. Financial Institutions §5–705 (a) (1)(iv) “Good Friday;” should be deleted. (xi) “Christmas Day” should also be deleted. Each financial institution should be unencumbered with regard to the religious holidays, if any, that prompts closure. For these same reasons, General Provisions §1–111(a)(6) “Good Friday;” should be deleted. Also delete all of (b).

Different business closure days may have different impacts on profit. Some may argue it is therefore unfair to allow business to individually select their weekly day of closure. However, government selecting a common closure day does not remedy this problem, instead it shifts who is being disadvantaged away from a majority with greater political clout to religious minorities with less political clout who are compelled to close their business two days a week instead of one. Government should avoid taking sides between religious differences over which day of the week is the day that a deity has instructed is to be the day of rest by not identifying the day businesses close.