

WHEREAS, A recent mass suicide in California, cult-motivated murders in Mississippi and Florida, and a subway gassing incident in Japan have increased national awareness of the destructive nature of cult activities; and

WHEREAS, It has been estimated that there are as many as 2,000 cults operating within the United States with 4 million to 6 million members; and

WHEREAS, Cult recruitment activities are often directed towards students on college campuses; and

WHEREAS, College students are particularly vulnerable to cult recruitment because they are often grappling with becoming independent, overwhelmed with new responsibilities and relationships, adjusting to new environments, and anxious about their futures; and

WHEREAS, College students who become involved with cults undergo personality changes, suffer academically and financially, are alienated from their families and friends, and are robbed of the very things universities were designed to encourage: freedom of thought, intellectual growth, and personal development; and

WHEREAS, Some college administrators have become concerned about cult activities on campus and have taken action to address the situation, but many others have failed to recognize the threat, have refused to deal with the problem, or are searching for policy directions as to how to deal with it; and

WHEREAS, Although the United States Constitution and the Maryland Constitution clearly and properly limit the ability of any government entity to interfere with the free exercise of religion by any person or group, the State of Maryland has a right and a responsibility to examine the behaviors of members of any group who violate State or local law or campus policies regarding deception, harassment, or fraud, or who threaten the mental, emotional, or physical well-being of the citizens of Maryland or students enrolled in the University System of Maryland, Morgan State University, and St. Mary's College; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That there shall be a Task Force to Study the Effects of Cult Activities on Public Senior Higher Education Institutions ; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Task Force shall be composed of:

(1) Two members of the House of Delegates, appointed by the Speaker of the House;

(2) Two members of the Senate of Maryland, appointed by the President of the Senate;

(3) The Chancellor of the University System of Maryland or the Chancellor's designee;

(4) The President of the University of Maryland, College Park or the President's designee;

(4) (5) The President of St. Mary's College or the President's designee;