

The Senate Committee on Government Oversight offered the following substitute to HB 925:

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Article 1 of Chapter 3 of Title 38 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated,
2 relating to general provisions relative to emergency management, so as to prohibit any
3 governmental entity from discriminating against and closing a place of worship during an
4 emergency; to provide for civil relief and damages; to provide for related matters; to provide
5 for a short title; to provide for an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other
6 purposes.

7 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

8 **SECTION 1.**

9 This Act shall be known and may be cited as the "Protecting Religious Assembly in States
10 of Emergency (PRAISE) Act."

11 **SECTION 2.**

12 Article 1 of Chapter 3 of Title 38 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to
13 general provisions relative to emergency management, is amended by adding a new Code
14 section to read as follows:

15 "38-3-8.

16 (a) Any order, rule, regulation, or other directive issued by any governmental entity
17 pursuant to an emergency or health or safety determination that requires closure or
18 limitation of any business or other facility otherwise open to public use or patronage but
19 which exempts in whole or in part any particular entity or set of entities shall exempt to the
20 same extent any place of worship entitled to the religious exemption found in 26 U.S.C.
21 Section 501(c)(3) or 26 U.S.C. Section 508(c)(1)(A) in effect on January 1, 2024.

22 (b) Any person or entity burdened or impaired by a violation of subsection (a) of this Code
23 section may bring a civil action for relief against such burden or impairment in any court
24 of general jurisdiction. Relief may include injunctive orders, compensatory damages,
25 nominal damages, a declaration of a violation, and, where malice or recklessness is
26 demonstrated, punitive damages.

27 (c) This Code section shall be construed to afford to religious institutions and places of
28 worship the same degree of freedom to meet as is afforded to the most favored entity or set
29 of entities.

30 (d) No provision of this Code section which interferes with or contradicts 42 U.S.C.
31 Section 247 of the Public Health Service Act, 50 U.S.C. Sections 1601-1651 of the
32 National Emergencies Act, or any other provision of federal law shall be effective."

33 **SECTION 3.**

34 This Act shall become effective upon approval by the Governor or upon becoming law
35 without such approval.

36 **SECTION 4.**

37 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.