



Maryland 2018 General Assembly Legislative Session Wrap-Up

The Maryland General Assembly adjourned its 438th session on Sine Die at midnight on April 9, 2018. A total of 3101 bills were introduced this year with 889 passed. There were some significant issues that were debated including but not limited to the State budget, hate crimes, education funding, minimum wage and paid sick leave, domestic violence protections and sexual harassment prevention, tax cuts and credits, gun violence, immigration issues, environmental issues, health care, and many more. During the ninety day session, the JCRC monitored and lobbied for several important pieces of legislation and to secure necessary funding for projects in the State budget, all of which have great impacts on our partner agencies, the Jewish community and other important stakeholders.

Fiscal Year 2019 Budget

The JCRC is proud that we were able to secure over \$2.4 million in funds from the State that are focused on safety net services to help substantially improve the lives of our fellow citizens, and for the security and safety of the community. These important projects represent an opportunity to further strengthen the private-public partnership in the delivery of vital social services.

Bond Bills

- \$75,000 bond bill for the Bender Jewish Community Center of Greater Washington for security enhancements and renovations to the front entrance vestibule and lobby.

Capital and Operating Budget

- \$1,000,000 in grants funds was approved in the budget for private schools and child care centers at-risk of hate crimes. The JCRC was instrumental in passing legislation during the 2017 legislative session and getting funding approved in the 2018 legislative session. Jewish day schools and child care centers, along with other private schools at-risk of hate crimes, will now be able to access grants funds for both operating and capital security needs.
- \$1,000,000 for The University of Maryland's Hillel new Student Center, which provides a place for students of all faiths, cultures and ethnicities.
- \$350,000 grant in the Department of Aging's budget for the Jewish Social Service Agency for Holocaust survivors programming.
- \$450,000 Coming of Age grant in the Department of Aging's budget, \$225,000 of which will directly support age-in-place programming for the MD/DC suburban area.

- \$250,000 for the Charles E. Smith Life Communities to help update its physical plants needs and ensure the safety of residents and patients by replacing the outdated generator and increase generator capacity to near 100% at the Ring House.
- \$275,000 grant in the Department of Business and Economic Development’s budget for the Maryland Israel Development Center’s work.
- \$150,000 bond bill for the Melvin J. Berman Hebrew Academy for significant renovations to help with repairs and replacement of seven sections of the school’s roof.
- \$75,000 for the Charles E. Smith Life Communities to help with general operating support for the ElderSAFE Center’s activities that provides temporary shelter, holistic care, and community referrals to vulnerable adults who are 60+ and are victims of abuse (physical, sexual, psychological, and financial) and/or neglect.
- Support for BOOST funding in the operating budget - The JCRC has always had a strong commitment to public education and continues to support education-related policies and funding that help our public schools throughout the State of Maryland. Additionally, over the past several years we have also seen our Jewish day school population thriving and growing tremendously. We also recognize the positive contributions of Jewish educational institutions and their roles in helping to build and strengthen our community. JCRC continues to support the BOOST program as passed by the Maryland legislature in 2016 and the increase in funding that was recommended in this year’s budget. The BOOST program has made a huge difference for close to 100 families in Montgomery County alone and continues to provide a benefit for our non-public school families in need throughout our own local community. The program has proven to be successful in helping with day school affordability for our families that seek ways to offset tuition costs at a private or parochial school. We see supporting a measured increase as a reasonable amount that will go a long way. Many lower-income students will have a choice to attend a Jewish day school. Moreover, because the program is funded through general tax revenue, we feel it adds new money for education without taking away money from public schools.

Policy Initiatives 2018

- Family Law – Domestic Violence – Definition of Abuse – SB121/HB328 expands the definition of “abuse” as it applies to petitions for domestic violence protective orders to include “revenge porn.” Shalom bayit—peace in home—is a central tenet of Judaism. However, it is not the reality in many homes where the constant threat of abuse continues to erode both family and community life. The Jewish Community Relations Council, together with the Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse, has been a long-time supporter of measures to aid and protect victims of domestic violence. This new law builds on measures we have supported in the past to help end the cycle of abuse.
- Family Law – Domestic Violence – Permanent Protective Orders – SB491/HB1303 expands the circumstances under which a court is now required to issue a permanent protective order against an individual if (1) an interim, temporary, or final protective order has been issued against the individual; and (2) the individual was convicted and

sentenced to serve a term of imprisonment of at least 5 years for the act of abuse that led to the original protective order and the individual has served at least 12 months of the sentence; OR (1) during the term of the interim, temporary or final protective order, the individual committed an act of abuse against the person eligible for relief; and (2) the individual was convicted and sentenced to serve a term of imprisonment of at least 5 years for the act and has served at least 12 months of the sentence. This new law provides much needed relief to many victims who express fear and concern about the protective order expiring and whether the abuser will resume or escalate in their harassing, threatening and often violent behavior. By maintaining the provisions of a protective order permanently, victims won't have to constantly worry about an order expiring or an abuser showing up unannounced at their home or workplace. By allowing more survivors to be eligible for the scheme of protective orders, the new law relieves part of the stress and fear that stems from traumatic experiences like domestic violence and the toll they take on Maryland families. This valuable relief leads to safety and stability for survivors of domestic violence.

- Criminal Law – Hate Crimes – Group Victim – SB528/HB700 prohibits a person from committing certain acts against a group because of the group's race, color, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender, disability, or national origin, or because the group is homeless. In recent years, we have seen an increase in hate crimes, incidents, and threats being committed not just against individuals but towards specific groups as well. This new law will help to strengthen our current hate crime statute by making sure groups are protected not just individuals. We have seen an increase in groups being targeted with hate-filled messages, vandalism, and other criminal activity. Under Maryland law would a group of victims can now find recourse under Maryland's hate crime laws.
- Hate Crimes – Threats and Penalties – SB671/HB246 would have (1) prohibited a person from threatening to commit a violation of specified hate crimes; (2) altered penalties for violations of the State's prohibition on committing hate crimes; and (3) authorized a court to require a person convicted of committing a hate crime, as a condition of supervised release, to attend educational classes and perform community service related to the person or group that was the subject of the person's hate crime. In Montgomery County we've had several schools, synagogues, churches, mosques and other local institutions with swastikas and hate filled messages tagged both outside and inside the buildings. In 2017 alone, we saw a drastic increase of several hate incidents and threats, bomb threats, and more against individual members of our community and Jewish institutions. These threats currently do not fall under the hate crime statute. Senate Bill 671/House Bill 246 would have helped to strengthen our current hate crime statute by punishing individuals who make these heinous threats against someone because they are a certain race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation. Even though no physical harm may result from a hate threat, they are very personal crimes, which leave the victims with emotional and psychological impacts. Hate threats may not physically wound, but they may intimidate other members of the victim's community, leaving them feeling terrorized, isolated, vulnerable, and unprotected by the law. Unfortunately, this legislation did not pass this year.

- Hate Crimes – Civil Remedy – HB1119 would have authorized a person who is aggrieved by a violation of the State’s hate crime laws to bring a civil action against the person or persons who committed the violation and authorizes a court to award a variety of specified remedies. The legislation would have allowed economic and non-economic damages, punitive damages, and attorney’s fees to victims of hate crimes. According to the Anti-Defamation League’s data, of the 45 states and the District of Columbia that have state hate crime laws, 33 also permit civil actions for violation of the criminal statutes. In Montgomery County alone, we have seen an overwhelming amount of hate crimes, incidents, and threats towards individual members of our community. The JCRC is in contact with our local law enforcement on a regular basis and doing what we can to help support community members with information of who to report incidents to and how to navigate through the process. In January of 2017, the JCRC held a community-wide forum with County Executive Ike Leggett, Montgomery County police chief Tom Manger, MCPS school superintendent, head of school for the Charles E Smith Jewish Day school, an ADL representative, and other community leaders. There were a lot of questions on how to better educate the public on what to do when these hate crimes happen but also what civil remedies may be available to them as well. We think that it’s time Maryland join DC and the other 32 states that already have civil remedies in place for violation of state hate crime statutes. Unfortunately, the legislation did not pass again for the second year in a row.
- Income Tax – Earned Income Tax Credit – Eligibility Awareness Campaign – HB573 would have established an Earned Income Tax Credit Eligibility Awareness Campaign in the Department of Human Services (DHS). The purpose of the program is to encourage eligible individuals to claim the federal and State earned income tax credits. The bill would also require the Department to request certain taxpayer information from the Comptroller, to identify potentially eligible individuals, and to contact the individuals by mail for certain purposes. By making those who are eligible for the tax credit aware of their eligibility, more hard-working Marylanders can access a program that has been effective at lifting people out of poverty. Judaism embodies a sense of ethical responsibility to everybody in our nation to assure them the basic necessities of life and to use our efforts to provide all people with the ability to maintain their economic well-being and dignity.