

## **2024 Maryland General Assembly Legislative Session Wrap-Up**

The Maryland General Assembly wrapped up its 446<sup>th</sup> session on April 9<sup>th</sup>. The JCRC successfully lobbied for security dollars to protect our synagogues, childcare facilities and day schools from hate crimes and bias incidents. Given the unprecedented level of antisemitism, it was critical for us to ensure the safety and security of our community. Once again, we also continued to get funding to secure critical dollars for our agencies (JSSA & ElderSAFE) which provide excellent cost-effective social services on a non-sectarian basis to the elderly.

In the FY25 operating budget, we once again secured \$5 million in security for all houses of worship through the Protecting Against Hate Crimes (PAHC) grant program as well as \$3 million for nonpublic schools and childcare centers through the Hate Crimes Grant (HCG) program. The JCRC also advocated to secure funds for our non-sectarian social service agencies. JSSA received \$350,000 to meet the needs of Holocaust Survivors and \$225,000 to help support its Aging in Place services. The ElderSAFE Center of the Charles E. Smith Life Communities' (CESLC) received \$75,000 to protect older victims of abuse, and the Maryland Israel Development Center (MIDC) received \$300,000 to promote bilateral trade between Maryland and Israel. Finally, although it was a challenging budget climate, we successfully secured Legislative Bond Initiatives -\$150,000 for Makom/JFGH, \$100,000 for JSSA and \$92,000 for Yeshiva of GW.

On the legislative front, in the aftermath of the October 7<sup>th</sup> massacre in Israel, we devoted an extraordinary amount of time advocating to combat antisemitism and hatred. Some of our critical successes include:

- **House Bill 763** which amends the membership of the Hate Crime Response and Prevention Commission. Specifically, the bill removes organizational members of the Commission and mandates that the Attorney General appoint individuals representing members of protected classes under the State Hate Crime Laws.
- **House Bill 809** which allows for the removal of a Commission appointee for misconduct or other actions that violate set codes of conduct. It is essential to ensure that appointees do not undermine the Commission's work by engaging in hate speech and divisive rhetoric.
- **House Bill 1386** which requires the development of an anti-bias training program for all public-school employees. This is particularly important given the unprecedented number of antisemitic incidents in schools, in addition to other forms of bias and harassment. Teachers and administrators need to know how to handle these situations to ensure all students feel safe and protected on school grounds.

Unfortunately, **Senate Bill 1058** did not pass the House, despite overwhelming support in the Senate. The legislation, known as the *Educate to Stop the Hate Act*, would have mandated the development of curriculum in antihate and Holocaust education. Also, another JCRC priority, **House Bill 400**, did not advance beyond its initial bill hearing. This bill would have mandated health insurers provide coverage for annual behavioral health wellness visits, regardless of whether a diagnosis is made at the end of the visit.

