



***Developmental Disabilities Administration Budget***  
**Senate Budget and Taxation Committee**  
**Health and Human Services Subcommittee**  
**February 20, 2025**

The Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington (JCRC) serves as the public affairs and community relations arm of the Jewish community. The JCRC is strongly committed to cultivating society based on justice, tolerance and equity. We represent over 100 Jewish organizations, synagogues and schools in Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia. We advocate for our agencies that serve the most vulnerable residents and campaign for important policy interests on behalf of the Jewish community and all Marylanders. One of our top priorities is the well-being of the disability community, as we represent Makom, whose mission is to support and empower people with disabilities.

The JCRC is extremely concerned with the state's proposed fiscal year 2026 General Fund cut of \$235 million to the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA), which combines with a further reduction of \$220 million in federal financial participation. While we understand that Maryland faces a \$2.7 billion deficit, this proposed reduction would dramatically impact the ability of developmental disability providers to administer services to children and adults with developmental disabilities. Approximately 21,000 Marylanders with developmental disabilities are served through State DDA Home and Community Based Services (Medicaid waiver programs) which are matched by federal dollars, which would reduce federal funding to this population. The statewide impact of these proposed cuts for FY26 is estimated at \$455 million.

For decades, Makom has helped people with disabilities to achieve the quality of life to which they aspire. The proposed cuts will be devastating to its programs which allow people with disabilities to live independently, whether in a Makom resident or by providing in-home support to assist young adults' transition to productive and fulfilling lives. Makom estimates that it could lose up to \$6 million or 18% of its budget if these cuts and cost containment measures are implemented.

As a provider serving Montgomery County, Makom is particularly concerned that the proposed cuts include eliminating the geographical differential rate, which pays a higher rate to providers in six high-cost Maryland counties to account for higher



costs of doing business in those counties. The result of these proposed cuts could be felt immediately through the loss of critical workforce, as direct support professionals (DSP) facing significant pay cuts and increased workloads might leave the field to find better paying positions.

We understand the state's difficult financial position and believe it would be constructive for developmental disability providers to discuss mutual ways to engage in cost savings. Given the JCRC's long history of prioritizing the needs and rights of the disability community, it is our responsibility and moral obligation to speak out against these proposed cuts. It is critical that the state continues to support people with disabilities so they can receive the care and resources they deserve to achieve maximum independence and lead meaningful, productive lives. For these reasons, we wholeheartedly urge you to resist the Governor's proposed cuts in the FY26 DDA budget.



**Testimony in SUPPORT of *House Bill 324 – County Boards of Education – Antibias Training for Members – Requirement (County Board Member Antibias Training Act)***  
**Ways and Means Committee**  
**January 29, 2025**

The Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington (JCRC) serves as the public affairs and community relations arm of the Jewish community. We represent over 100 Jewish social service agencies, synagogues, and schools throughout Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The JCRC is strongly committed to cultivating a society based on freedom, justice, equity, and pluralism. We work throughout the region to advocate for our nonprofits that serve the most vulnerable on a non-sectarian basis and to campaign for important policy interests on behalf of the Jewish community and all Marylanders.

The JCRC supports House Bill 324 which requires each member of a county board of education to complete antibias training at least once during a member's term. This Bill comes on the heels of the Maryland General Assembly's passage last year of legislation requiring all school employees to undergo biennial antibias training, including an understanding of implicit bias, antisemitism, Islamophobia and other forms of hatred against marginalized communities. HB 324 closes the loophole which did *not* include Board of Education members. It also specifies that the training will be performed separately from that of other school employees.

The JCRC runs a robust education outreach and programming department. Its mission is to combat school-based antisemitism; advocate on behalf of Jewish students, families, and employees; and promote safe, hate-free, respectful learning environments for all students. In Montgomery County, the JCRC is also deeply engaged in addressing all forms of academic inequity. We have strongly supported MCPS' anti-racist audit, we are a proud member of the Black and Brown Coalition for Educational Equity and Excellence, and we also work closely with Identity to support MCPS' Latino youth. The JCRC works tirelessly on a grassroots level to help educate school staff about what antisemitism is and how we can work together to address it in our schools. We know first-hand that there is a lack of understanding about what exactly antisemitism is, which leads to it being treated differently from other forms of hatred.

Dramatic spikes in antisemitism over the last several years have been well-documented and show no signs of abating. Immediately following Hamas' brutal October 7, 2023, antisemitism skyrocketed across the United States. Nationally there was a 300% increase in antisemitic incidents. And in our region, the JCRC has been on the frontlines of this crisis, responding to over 150 incidents in the 9 months following October 7<sup>th</sup>, a majority of them in Montgomery County Public Schools. These incidents have run the gamut from property vandalism to hate-

based bullying and more. Six schools with significant numbers of Jewish students and faculty, some located mere blocks from synagogues, were targeted with hateful graffiti.

School personnel often have limited familiarity with antisemitism and little cultural competency about Jewish ethnicity, Jewish practice, and the critical importance of Israel to the Jewish identities of an overwhelming majority of American Jews. To address this gap, the JCRC has developed an ever-expanding roster of teacher training opportunities for educators. Most critically, we have partnered with the ADL's DC regional office to develop a comprehensive 3-hour training on antisemitism, anti-Zionism, and Jewish identity that has been presented to over 1,400 MCPS personnel. The JCRC strongly believes that school employees should have a baseline competency in the forms of hatred that are significantly manifesting in our schools at this time, both those that are religiously based - antisemitism and Islamophobia - and otherwise. That includes xenophobia, anti-Asian hatred, homophobia, transphobia, and racism. This knowledge can help schools respond swiftly and effectively to hate and bias incidents when they occur.

HB 324 is an expression of our community's commitment to responding forcefully, consistently, and sensitively to a problem that has only continued to worsen over recent months and years, and which undermines the very fabric of our society. It is also a commitment to ensuring that our schools reflect the very best values that we wish to instill in future generations of leaders. For these reasons we urge a favorable report for House Bill 324.

## **Testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill 1006 – Immigration Enforcement – Sensitive Locations – Guidelines and Policies (Protecting Sensitive Locations Act)**

**Judiciary Committee  
February 27, 2025**

Good evening members of the Judiciary committee. I am Rabbi Abbi Sharofsky, Director of Intergroup Relations and Rabbi in Residence for the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington (JCRC). The JCRC serves as the public affairs and community relations arm of the Jewish community, representing over 100 Jewish agencies, synagogues, and schools throughout the region. The JCRC is strongly committed to cultivating a society based on justice, mutual respect, equity and safety.

I am testifying today in support of House Bill 1006 (one zero zero six), the Protecting Sensitive Locations Act, which requires the Attorney General to establish guidelines for immigration enforcement including the protection of houses of worship from immigration raids.

This Shabbat, this Saturday, Jews throughout the world will read from the book of Exodus and hear this verse, from chapter 25:

וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשִׁכְנָתִי בְּתוֹכְכֶם:

*And let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them.*

We are commanded to build a sanctuary, a holy space dedicated for worship and being in God's presence. The word sanctuary holds so much meaning for so many, but first and foremost, it is about **being in a holy space**. This holy space **cannot be one of fear or intimidation**. The sanctuaries in our communities: the synagogues, churches, mosques, temples, gurdwaras – are holy and **cannot** be used against the people who seek to go there and fulfill their religious obligations.

**True religious liberty is ensuring that all people are able to worship safely and peacefully, without fear of intrusion, upholding the dignity and sanctity of holy spaces.** Delegates, I urge a favorable report of this bill, ensuring that our sacred spaces continue to be revered and treated with the sanctity they deserve.



**Testimony in OPPOSITION to *House Bill 1394 –  
Civil Actions – Nonprofit Organizations – Unauthorized Support of Israeli  
Settlement Activity (Not on Our Dime Act)*  
Judiciary Committee  
March 5, 2025**

The Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington (JCRC) serves as the public affairs and community relations arm of the Jewish community. We represent over 100 Jewish organizations and synagogues throughout Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The JCRC is strongly committed to cultivating a society based on freedom, justice, and pluralism. We work throughout the region to advocate for our agencies that serve the most vulnerable residents and to campaign for important policy interests on behalf of the Jewish community and all Marylanders.

The JCRC strongly opposes House Bill 1394 which prohibits nonprofits from working with the Government of Israel and Israelis who support “settlement activity.” The Bill demonizes and delegitimizes Israel, focusing on certain activities and alleged violence that is not unique to Israel, yet singles it out. The language of HB 1394 is dangerous and misleading, criminalizing support for the mere presence of Jews in areas where they have lived for thousands of years. The Bill also is overly broad. It gives the Maryland Secretary of State power to revoke a nonprofit’s status and the Attorney General power to sue a nonprofit and its officers for damages of not less than \$1 million and with a statute of limitation of ten years.

House Bill 1394 promotes an agenda that is harmful to Israelis, Palestinians, and Marylanders, by taking action against charitable organizations which are actually delivering critical services and humanitarian aid to the region. The language of the Bill demonstrates a lack of understanding of the history and dynamics of the region. It refers to East Jerusalem as “occupied territory” although the most holy sites in Judaism including the Old City and Western Wall are in East Jerusalem. Instead of working towards a peaceful resolution to the conflict in the region, HB 1394 undermines those efforts and only causes more harm and fuels more hatred and division. For these reasons, we ask for an unfavorable report on HB 1394.



**Testimony in SUPPORT of *Senate Bill 293 – County Boards of Education – Antibias Training for Members – Requirement (County Board Member Antibias Training Act)***  
**Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**  
**January 29, 2025**

The Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington (JCRC) serves as the public affairs and community relations arm of the Jewish community. We represent over 100 Jewish social service agencies, synagogues, and schools throughout Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The JCRC is strongly committed to cultivating a society based on freedom, justice, equity, and pluralism. We work throughout the region to advocate for our nonprofits that serve the most vulnerable on a non-sectarian basis and to campaign for important policy interests on behalf of the Jewish community and all Marylanders.

The JCRC supports Senate Bill 293 which requires each member of a county board of education to complete antibias training at least once during a member's term. This Bill comes on the heels of the Maryland General Assembly's passage last year of legislation requiring all school employees to undergo biennial antibias training, including an understanding of implicit bias, antisemitism, Islamophobia and other forms of hatred against marginalized communities. SB 293 closes the loophole which did *not* include Board of Education members. It also specifies that the training will be performed separately from that of other school employees.

The JCRC runs a robust education outreach and programming department. Its mission is to combat school-based antisemitism; advocate on behalf of Jewish students, families, and employees; and promote safe, hate-free, respectful learning environments for all students. In Montgomery County, the JCRC is also deeply engaged in addressing all forms of academic inequity. We have strongly supported MCPS' anti-racist audit, we are a proud member of the Black and Brown Coalition for Educational Equity and Excellence, and we also work closely with Identity to support MCPS' Latino youth. The JCRC works tirelessly on a grassroots level to help educate school staff about what antisemitism is and how we can work together to address it in our schools. We know first-hand that there is a lack of understanding about what exactly antisemitism is, which leads to it being treated differently from other forms of hatred.

Dramatic spikes in antisemitism over the last several years have been well-documented and show no signs of abating. Immediately following Hamas' brutal October 7, 2023, antisemitism skyrocketed across the United States. Nationally there was a 300% increase in antisemitic incidents. And in our region, the JCRC has been on the frontlines of this crisis, responding to over 150 incidents in the 9 months following October 7<sup>th</sup>, a majority of them in Montgomery County Public Schools. These incidents have run the gamut from property vandalism to hate-

based bullying and more. Six schools with significant numbers of Jewish students and faculty, some located mere blocks from synagogues, were targeted with hateful graffiti.

School personnel often have limited familiarity with antisemitism and little cultural competency about Jewish ethnicity, Jewish practice, and the critical importance of Israel to the Jewish identities of an overwhelming majority of American Jews. To address this gap, the JCRC has developed an ever-expanding roster of teacher training opportunities for educators. Most critically, we have partnered with the ADL's DC regional office to develop a comprehensive 3-hour training on antisemitism, anti-Zionism, and Jewish identity that has been presented to over 1,400 MCPS personnel. The JCRC strongly believes that school employees should have a baseline competency in the forms of hatred that are significantly manifesting in our schools at this time, both those that are religiously based - antisemitism and Islamophobia - and otherwise. That includes xenophobia, anti-Asian hatred, homophobia, transphobia, and racism. This knowledge can help schools respond swiftly and effectively to hate and bias incidents when they occur.

SB 293 is an expression of our community's commitment to responding forcefully, consistently, and sensitively to a problem that has only continued to worsen over recent months and years, and which undermines the very fabric of our society. It is also a commitment to ensuring that our schools reflect the very best values that we wish to instill in future generations of leaders. For these reasons we urge a favorable report for Senate Bill 293.





**Testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 435 – *Institutions of Higher Education and Elementary and Secondary Schools – Title VI Coordinators (Remove Discrimination in Education Act)***  
**Education, Energy, and the Environment**  
**March 5, 2025**

The Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington (JCRC) serves as the public affairs and community relations arm of the Jewish community. We represent over 100 Jewish social service agencies, synagogues, and schools throughout Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The JCRC is strongly committed to cultivating a society based on mutual respect, justice, equity and safety. We work throughout the region to advocate for our nonprofits that serve the most vulnerable on a non-sectarian basis and to campaign for important policy interests on behalf of the Jewish community and all Marylanders.

The JCRC supports Senate Bill 435, Remove Discrimination in Education Act. This Bill requires all higher education and local schools to appoint a Title VI Coordinator to ensure compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to prevent discrimination based on race, color or national origin. This Coordinator would be responsible for overseeing equal access to programming on campus, documenting and investigating complaints, and providing training and resources about Title VI law and regulations.

The need for this bill could not be more urgent given the unprecedented and unacceptable rise of antisemitism in the US, especially targeting Jewish students. According to the ADL, Maryland ranked 7<sup>th</sup> in the nation for the highest number of antisemitic incidents. And since Oct. 7<sup>th</sup>, there has been a 300% increase in antisemitic incidents, with violent protests on many campuses. A very recent AJC study showed that more than a third of American Jewish college students reported experiencing antisemitism at least once during their time on campus. Free speech must always be protected, but students should never be harassed, threatened or bullied because of their Jewish identity.

At the JCRC, our top priority is combating antisemitism and protecting the safety and security of the Jewish people, including Jewish students whether at our local schools or college campuses. In Montgomery County, our agency took the lead in addressing antisemitism at Montgomery County Community College (MCCC). We worked closely with the college president and administration to call out professors who were spewing hateful rhetoric. Since then, we have led trainings on antisemitism and beefed up Jewish and interfaith programming. The JCRC also has been on the frontlines confronting the spike in antisemitism at Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). We have trained thousands of educators in MCPS on Jewish identity and

antisemitism and been a critical resource for schools with significant numbers of Jewish students and faculty.

Senate Bill 435 would have been a huge asset to both MCPS and MCCC had it been in place last fall. No one should be targeted because of who they are or what they believe in, especially in the classroom or on campus. With a dedicated Title VI Coordinator, schools can stay in compliance with the law and reinforce the fundamental right to an education free from bias, hate and intimidation. The bill strengthens protections, ensures accountability and fosters a safer, more inclusive learning environment for all students. For these reasons, we support Senate Bill 435 and ask for a favorable report.



**Testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 828 – Immigration Enforcement –  
Sensitive Locations – Guidelines and Policies  
(Protecting Sensitive Locations Act)  
Judicial Proceedings Committee  
March 4, 2025**

The Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington (JCRC) serves as the public affairs and community relations arm of the Jewish community. We represent over 100 Jewish agencies, synagogues, and schools throughout the region. The JCRC is strongly committed to cultivating a society based on justice, tolerance, and equity. We advocate on behalf of our social service agencies, which serve the most vulnerable on a non-sectarian basis. We also campaign for important policy interests on behalf of the Jewish community and all Marylanders.

The JCRC supports Senate Bill 828, the Protecting Sensitive Locations Act, which requires the Attorney General to establish guidelines for immigration enforcement including the protection of houses of worship from immigration raids. Our synagogues must remain safe and welcoming to all and our First Amendment right to religious liberty must be protected regardless of immigration status. SB 828 gets to the heart of Jewish law and tradition, which commands us 36 times in the Torah to welcome the stranger and help those in need as we know what it feels like to be a newcomer and surrounded by people who are hostile.

For more than a decade, federal policy has limited Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) from entering sensitive locations including places of worship and we will not stand idly by as new policies threaten immigrants and instill fear inside houses of worship. The JCRC's long-standing immigration policy resolution opposes state and local legislation that would direct local law enforcement agencies to seek out undocumented immigrants and to detain them for deportation by federal authorities. In Montgomery County we have been leaders in advocating for the immigrant community and we will continue to do so.

During times of uncertainty and instability, people often turn to their religious institutions for comfort and care. Our synagogues have worked closely with other interfaith leaders to help settle refugees from Syria, Afghanistan and Ukraine, and along with our wonderful partner, Identity, we've helped newcomers from the southern border. The JCRC is committed to ensuring that everyone can practice their religion freely and Maryland remains an inclusive, compassionate and welcoming community to immigrants during this period of instability and fear. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report for Senate Bill 828.





**Testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 847 – Higher Education – Antihate and Antidiscrimination Policies and Workgroup (Maryland Campus Accountability and Modernization to Protect University Students Act)  
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
March 5, 2025**

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The JCRC supports Senate Bill 847, the Maryland Campus Act, which requires institutions of higher education to adopt and enforce policies regarding racial, religious and ethnic violence, harassment and intimidation. These policies include mandatory staff training on responding to hate-bias incidents and a clear and accessible complaint tracking system and adjudication procedure. The Bill also includes establishing a Campus Community Grant program of \$500,000 to provide support for interfaith outreach and cultural collaboration between student groups.

This Bill is of paramount importance to the JCRC whose top priority is combating antisemitism and protecting the safety and security of the Jewish people, including Jewish students on college campuses. At Montgomery County Community College (MCCC) last spring, our agency took the lead in addressing several high-profile antisemitic incidents. We worked closely with the college's president and administrators to call out professors who were spewing hateful, antisemitic rhetoric, and to condemn a planned screening of the virulently antisemitic film, *The Occupation of the American Mind*. After our efforts, the school decided not to show the film. Since then, we have continued to collaborate with the administration to ensure policies regarding antisemitism are updated. We have led trainings about understanding antisemitism and have worked to build up both Jewish life and interfaith programming on the campus.

The Maryland Campus Act would have been a huge asset had it been in place. It would have provided a roadmap for the school and established both mechanisms and accountability needed to address the vitriol and hate. We made tremendous progress at MCCC, and with this legislation, our success can be replicated at other schools. College campuses must be places of learning, not hotbeds of hate. For these reasons, we support Senate Bill 847 and ask for a favorable report.





**Testimony in SUPPORT of *Senate Bill 916* –  
*Education - Curriculum Standards – Antihate and Holocaust Education*  
*(Educate to Stop the Hate Act)* –  
**Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**  
**March 5, 2025****

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Senate Bill 916 requires that the State Board of Education develop curriculum standards and resources for antihate and Holocaust education. The Bill applies to elementary, middle and high school classrooms in all public and nonpublic schools that receive state funding. Additionally, the curriculum would include utilizing historical contexts that have led to contemporary racism and prejudice and the Holocaust. It also will revise the high school history framework to include the contributions of historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups.

We are living in a time of heightened hate where every marginalized community seems to be under attack. Senate Bill 916 is a critical piece of legislation to combat such hatred. Students of all ages need to understand history, including bigotry and prejudice, so that horrific events of the past - like the Holocaust - will never be repeated. We are grateful that in the last year, the Maryland State Department of Education's Educate to Stop the Hate Committee has recommended improvements to the Social Studies curriculum. In fact, several JCRC suggestions have been incorporated such as including the Holocaust when talking about authoritarian regimes in the 1900s, including antisemitism when discussing the Bubonic Plague, and when analyzing cultural norms in the 1920s, discussing perpetuating various forms of discrimination such as antisemitism.

While we recognize the importance of these curriculum changes, the JCRC also supports codifying Holocaust Education, especially as antisemitism continues to rise to unacceptable and unprecedented levels. According to the ADL, Maryland ranked 7th in the nation for the highest number of antisemitic incidents, and since October 7th, 2023, there has been a 300% increase in antisemitic incidents, many of these in Montgomery County Public Schools. SB 916 is not a panacea, but it certainly is a necessary step to help stem the tide and fight back against the

harmful impact of hatred which undermines the very fabric of our society. For these reasons, we ask for a favorable report on SB 916.