



## 2025 VIRGINIA LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

### State & Local Issues

- **Countering Antisemitism:** More than a year after Hamas's October 7, 2023, massacre and kidnapping of Israelis and the global tidal wave of Jew-hatred that followed, fighting antisemitism remains our highest priority. Antisemitic incidents and rhetoric deeply impact the Jewish community's sense of safety, security and belonging and had been on the rise well before October 7. Regrettably, it has continued to skyrocket across political and ideological spectrums.  
  
We support legislation, policies, educational efforts and initiatives that fight hatred targeting Jews and the Jewish community, as well as all other forms of hatred and bigotry. We further support and encourage efforts to correct misinformation, disinformation and distortion of facts about Jews and Israel, much of which is designed to foster antisemitism and propagate or repackage age-old antisemitic tropes.
- **Security for Institutions at Risk of Hate Crimes:** The JCRC supports increasing funding for security measures and programs to protect nonprofits, including faith-based organizations at risk of hate crimes, as well as efforts to make that funding more easily accessible.
- **Strengthening the Network of Social Services:** Our Jewish agencies provide a range of critical services to aging adults, individuals with disabilities, victims of domestic violence, Holocaust survivors, and individuals seeking counseling and mental health care, regardless of faith, background, or ability to pay. We support expanding the social safety net to strengthen our agencies serving all Virginians in need.
- **Virginia-Israel Advisory Board:** The JCRC supports the Virginia-Israel Advisory Board (VIAB), which facilitates economic development opportunities and enhances educational and cultural ties between the Commonwealth of Virginia and the State of Israel. The VIAB assists Israeli companies in building their U.S. operations in Virginia, which increases investment and jobs in the Commonwealth and enables Virginia companies to access Israeli technology.
- **Reproductive Health:** The JCRC supports legislation and constitutional changes to ensure that Virginians have access to comprehensive health care and do not face discrimination or government overreach into relationships with their health care providers, their family or their faith.

- **Democracy Protection and Voter Access:** The JCRC recognizes that protecting democracy is essential to a thriving America and a thriving Jewish community. We support laws, policies and initiatives that strengthen the infrastructure of the democratic process such as civics education; poll worker recruitment, training and protection; voter access and other initiatives that combat misinformation.

In addition, we support reversing disenfranchisement laws that bar Americans from voting because of past criminal convictions for which they have completed their sentence.

- **Separation of Church and State:** The JCRC supports the constitutional right to individual religious expression and opposes efforts to legislate religious practice in Virginia government institutions and schools.
- **Justice for Individuals and Communities:** The JCRC supports legislation, programs and initiatives that protect the most vulnerable in our community and promote a just and caring society.

This includes supporting public policies that create affordable housing opportunities, address food security, provide access to quality education, ensure accountability in the criminal justice system, and otherwise increase access to resources that allow people to live with dignity and participate in society regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexuality, or disability.

- **Environment and Climate Change:** The JCRC supports policies to protect our environment through adaptation, mitigation and resilience.
- **Gun Violence Protection:** The JCRC supports bipartisan efforts to prevent gun violence and keep firearms out of the wrong hands.

## Federal Issues

- **Supporting Israel:** The JCRC supports all efforts to secure the release of all remaining hostages held in Gaza.

We also strongly support continued implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding, through which the U.S. provides approximately \$3.8 billion in annual aid to Israel. This funding, which includes aid for missile defense systems such as Iron Dome, helps Israel defend herself from indiscriminate rocket attacks. This support remains essential to maintaining Israel's Qualitative Military Edge and its ability to counter enemies of both Israel and the United States.

- **Security for Jewish Agencies:** The JCRC supports initiatives to protect the Jewish community from potential threats. One example is the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. NSGP is a critical tool to protect Jewish and other faith-based nonprofits from physical threats through target hardening and other physical security enhancements.

The JCRC will advocate for \$500 million in annual funding for NSGP to meet the rising demand from Jewish institutions due to the growing number of threats our community has faced since October 7<sup>th</sup>.

- **Antisemitism:** The JCRC supports legislation and policies to address the unprecedented spike in antisemitism on college campuses. Jewish students are increasingly worried about their safety and security at school, and many are hiding their Jewish identity.

We strongly endorse the Antisemitism Awareness Act, which requires the Department of Education to use the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism when enforcing federal anti-discrimination laws.

We support efforts to counter the steep rise of antisemitism in healthcare since October 7<sup>th</sup>. The JCRC will work to educate members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, as well as their staff, about antisemitism that has permeated medical schools, healthcare institutions, workplaces, and professional associations since October 7<sup>th</sup>, mirroring trends across broader society. We will work to raise awareness of Jewish healthcare professionals that have faced boycotts and bias due to their Jewish identity.

- **Social Safety Net:** The JCRC supports programs that provide additional resources to enhance the safety net for our nation's most vulnerable citizens, including Holocaust survivors, individuals with disabilities, and older adults.

One such initiative is \$10 million in annual funding for the Holocaust Survivor Assistance Program to support aging Holocaust survivors and their caregivers.

We also support the SSI Penalty Eliminations Savings Act. Millions of low-income seniors and people with disabilities rely on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to pay for their basic needs. Unfortunately, current rules penalize them for saving even modest amounts. The SSI Penalty Elimination Savings Act would modernize these outdated policies, allowing SSI beneficiaries to save for emergencies and their future without losing the critical benefits they need.