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**Written Testimony**

**Senate Bill 840 - Public Safety - Protecting Against Hate Crimes Grant Fund - Establishment**

**Budget and Taxation Committee**

**February 22, 2023**

**Support**

**Background:** Senate Bill 840 (SB840) would codify the budget language of the Protecting Against Hate Crimes Grant Program which was established in FY2020 because of the unfortunate rise in hate bias incidents in Maryland and throughout the country. These grants are used for infrastructure upgrades and security personnel for institutions deemed at-risk for hate crimes or attacks. The bill proposes \$5 million dollars for the grant program, the same as the FY24 budget allocation, with at least \$1 million set aside for religious institutions.

**Written Comments:** The Baltimore Jewish Council, which represents The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore and its agencies, respectfully urges the Committee to codify this grant program. This grant aims to directly address the recent climate of fear and intimidation caused by rising hate/bias incidents. Everyone deserves to feel safe in their places of worship and religious institutions. With the recent tragedies in Colleyville, Pittsburgh, Poway, Jersey City and Monsey fresh on everyone's minds, the concern of a similar tragedy in Maryland is very real. For the past five years, the Jewish community has been the 2nd most common target of hate/bias incidents reported to the Maryland State Police, with the highest percentage based on religion. We cannot allow the fear of antisemitism and hate crimes deter people from attending their own places of worship and religious institutions. Instead, we must act so that everyone feels free to practice their faith in a space that is secure. With this in mind we ask that you take bold action to protect more Marylanders from hate crimes and codify the Protecting Against Hate Crimes Grant Program.

For these reasons the Baltimore Jewish Council asks for a favorable report on SB840.

BALTIMORE JEWISH COUNCIL

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Baltimore Jewish Council is an agency of The Associated

 **The Associated**  
 Jewish Federation of Baltimore

*The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of The Associated: Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.*