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Baltimore District

Written Testimony

**House Bill 71 - Holocaust Education Assistance Grant Program - Established
Ways and Means Committee – January 31, 2024
Support**

Background: House Bill 71 would establish the Holocaust Education Assistance Grant Program in the Maryland State Department of Education with the purpose of assisting local school systems with the training of teachers to teach Holocaust curriculum in public schools. This grant program could only be used for teacher training classes and/or teaching materials. The annual appropriation from the Governor's budget would \$500,000, and school systems could apply for up to \$50,000 in funding.

Written Comments: The rise in antisemitic acts across the country over the past few years, especially in the wake of the horrific attack on Israel on October 7th, 2023 and the resulting Israel-Hamas War, is not lost on the Jewish Community. In fact, the ADL reports that antisemitic incidents have increased 337% since the War began.

The Baltimore Jewish Times released an article just ahead of this year's Holocaust Remembrance Day (January 27th), that highlights two Holocaust survivors and their take on recent events and the parallels to what they experienced during The Holocaust. *"The Nazis wanted to annihilate all the Jews, and that is exactly what Hamas is doing now," said Weiman, who is 89 and a child survivor from Germany. "They're educating children, and that's what the Nazis did. They are dehumanizing Jews."* ([From Baltimore Jewish Times](#))

Maryland is on the path of updating its curriculum about the Holocaust. In a [memo published by the Interim State Superintendent of Schools](#) on January 23rd, 2024, the new 6th and 7th grade social studies curriculums outline the inclusion of lessons on antisemitism and "analyzing the impact of physical geography, nationalism, World War I and II, and the actions of international organizations, the Holocaust, and the founding of Israel."

As Maryland endeavors to implement more substantive Holocaust education in middle school classrooms, we recognize that it is important to give our teachers the tools they need to both understand and properly teach the material to their students. Without funding for professional development and materials, this can be hard to achieve.

By establishing the Holocaust Education Assistance Grant Program, Maryland's local boards of education will be able to hire the proper entities to train their teachers on Holocaust curriculum; provide needed materials to both teachers and students for effective lessons; and allow funding to go to activities directly related to Holocaust education, which could allow for field trips, guest speakers, and more.

One of the best ways to prevent history from repeating itself is through proper education. **For these reasons, the Baltimore Jewish Councils asks for a favorable report on HB71.**

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.

BALTIMORE JEWISH COUNCIL

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Baltimore Jewish Council is an agency of The Associated

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