



HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL 1181

EDUCATION – CURRICULUM STANDARDS – ANTIHATE AND HOLOCAUST EDUCATION (EDUCATE TO STOP THE HATE ACT)

FEBRUARY 28, 2024

STATEMENT OF INFORMATION

Agudath Israel of Maryland speaks on behalf of the Orthodox Jewish communities across Maryland, on behalf of the 10,000 students attending 30 Jewish day schools in our great state, and on behalf of the many but dwindling number of survivors of the Holocaust and their families, who are such an important part of our communities.

We are fully supportive of the intent of the sponsors of this bill and applaud their great sensitivity to these issues. We fully concur with the statements in the preamble to this act, viz. “hate, bigotry, and prejudice undermine the very fabric of our society,” and we share the deep concern voiced in the preamble that “hateful sentiment is reaching unprecedented levels in contemporary society.” As an attempt to combat this alarming trend, House Bill 1181 would require various curriculum standards focusing on the teaching of the historical contexts that have led to contemporary racism and prejudice, on the Holocaust and antisemitism, and on the contributions of historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups (including African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, Hispanic Americans, Jewish Americans, Arab Americans, and other historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups).

There is no question that education is one of the primary ways through which we can combat the alarming rise in hate.

However, we do wish to voice the following perspective: the state should not dictate the particulars of curriculum to its nonpublic schools. Our students do receive proper historical education on the subjects of the historical contexts leading to discrimination and prejudice, on the Holocaust and antisemitism, and on the contributions of minorities (in addition to education opportunities outside of school); other nonpublic school students in Maryland do so as well. The value of allowing Maryland’s nonpublic schools to craft their curriculum independently (while ensuring they meet State licensing, approval, and institutional requirements) is long recognized, and should not be compromised, admirable as the intent may be.

Speaking on behalf of the Orthodox Jewish communities of Maryland, we laud the intent of this bill of ensuring that our educational system does not allow hate to go unchallenged. At the same time, we state our concerns with the potential compromising of the integrity and independence of nonpublic schools and opening the door for the state’s intrusion into mandating the curriculum for nonpublic schools.