

Senate Bill SB1058

Testimony from Nicole Kashtan, Montgomery County Jewish Parents Coalition

My name is Nicole Kashtan, and I am writing today in support of SB1058 on behalf of Montgomery County Jewish Parents Coalition. Do you know what issue is on my mind from the time I wake up until when I go to sleep especially after October 7th 2023 when terrorists invaded Israel and murdered over 1200 people and took 250 hostage? Rampant antisemitism and what the future holds for my family, especially my kids. We have not seen such dark times for Jews since the 1930s, and we all know what emerged in the 1940s due to the build up of that hate. Well, not all. Young people, particularly Gen Z and now Gen Alpha, often have little to no substantial and accurate knowledge of the Holocaust. This lack of knowledge is compounded by young people feeding into ancient antisemitic stereotypes and tropes, repackaged as Instagram infographics claiming that Israelis are the new Nazis, and Tik Tok videos about how “Hitler should have finished the job.” This is why we need to urgently pass SB1058, so that improved and mandatory Holocaust education can be implemented in schools across Maryland.

Robust Holocaust education that provides context for how and why the Holocaust was able to happen should hopefully help students understand why marginalizing and demonizing Jews in society, including in their own schools, is so dangerous. The implementation must also include strong teacher training, as this is a subject that requires a lot of sensitivity, especially when it comes to Jewish students and non-Jewish students interacting with the subject matter in different ways. While Holocaust education is not the end all be all in fighting antisemitism, we certainly need to do more to fight anti-Zionism which has crept into the younger generation’s discourse, it is a good foundation. Let’s not wait any longer. Please pass SB1058.