



# State of Maryland Commission on Civil Rights

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**February 26, 2024**

## **House Bill 1386 – Education – Employee Training and Holocaust Education Study – Requirements**

### **POSITION: Support**

Dear Chair, Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee:

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (“MCCR”; “The Commission”) is the State agency responsible for the enforcement of laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, health services and state contracts based upon race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, physical and mental disability, and source of income.

SB 1386 mandates county boards of education and nonpublic schools to require each employee receive prevention of antisemitism and islamophobia training each year. The bill further requires institutions of higher education to include specific training on preventing antisemitism and islamophobia in their cultural diversity programs. And finally it requires the submission of a report regarding an independent study and assessment of Holocaust education in elementary and secondary schools.

The current war between Israel and Hamas militants has led to increased tensions in the country but none more prevalent than on our college campuses. Both Jewish and Muslim students worrying about being subjected higher levels of hate speech, harassment, and threats of violence. Leading Jewish and Muslim organizations are reporting a rise in hate bias incidents since the war broke out. Present day social media enhances opportunities to spread hate that leads to antisemitism and islamophobia incidents by anonymous perpetrators hiding behind keyboards.

In a recent poll conducted by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and Hillel International (the Jewish outreach organization), 73% of the Jewish college students and 44% of non-Jewish students have experienced or observed antisemitic incidents since the commencement of the 2023/2024 school year. Whereas, the California Chapter of Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) reports that islamophobia is prevalent upon conducting interviews of over 700 Muslim students with 47.1% reporting being bullied for being Muslim.

*“Our vision is to have a State that is free from any trace of unlawful discrimination.”*

William Donald Schaefer Tower, 6 Saint Paul Street, Suite 900, Baltimore, Maryland 21202-1631  
Phone: 410-767-8600 · Toll Free: 1-800-637-6247 · Maryland Relay: 711 · Fax: 410-333-1841  
Website: [mccr.maryland.gov](http://mccr.maryland.gov) · E-Mail: [mccr@maryland.gov](mailto:mccr@maryland.gov)

The lack of preventive and reporting measures by schools and insufficient training for educators on how to de-escalate or mediate bullying help to perpetuate the problem. HB 1386 seeks to address that deficiency here in Maryland by mandating that education and training on antisemitic and islamophobia prevention take place for school employees and be included in diversity programs at institutions of higher learning. As stated on United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) website, addressing antisemitism and for that matter islamophobia must be through education to address both an immediate security imperative and a long term educational investment as a means to promote human rights and global citizenship.

For these reasons, the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights urges a favorable report on HB 1386. Thank you for your time and consideration of the information contained in this letter. The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights looks forward to the continued opportunity to work with you to improve and promote civil rights in Maryland.