



**Testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill 71 –
Holocaust Education Assistance Grant Program - Established
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
April 2, 2025**

The Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington (JCRC) serves as the public affairs and community relations arm of the Jewish community. We represent over 100 Jewish social service agencies, synagogues, and schools throughout Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The JCRC is strongly committed to cultivating a society based on freedom, justice, equity, and pluralism. We advocate for our nonprofits that serve the most vulnerable on a non-sectarian basis and to campaign for important policy interests on behalf of the Jewish community and all Marylanders. We also work to combat antisemitism and all forms of hatred, and one of our most sacred responsibilities is Holocaust remembrance.

The JCRC supports House Bill 71 With Amendments which is critical to our efforts to strengthen Holocaust education, teach tolerance, and reduce bigotry and prejudice. The purpose of the Bill is to establish the Holocaust Education Assistance Grant Program in the State Department of Education to help to fund Holocaust educational materials and training for teachers. The Governor shall include in the annual budget bill an appropriation of \$50,00 for this program. The JCRC believes this fund is necessary to ensure that teachers have the tools they need to educate students about one of the darkest chapters of history and one of the oldest forms of hatred-antisemitism.

The lack of knowledge about the Holocaust is astounding. According to a recent survey by the Claims Conference, which tracks Holocaust awareness, two-thirds of young Marylanders did not know 6 million were killed in the Holocaust, more than half could not name a single concentration camp, and 13% said they believed Jews caused the Holocaust. Survey after survey, we continue to witness a decline in Holocaust knowledge and awareness. Equally disturbing is the trend towards Holocaust denial and distortion. According to Gideon Taylor, Claims Conference President, “to address this trend, we must put a greater focus on Holocaust education in our schools globally. If we do not, denial will soon outweigh knowledge, and future generations will have no exposure to the critical lessons of the Holocaust.”

Our school systems need support, and they need it now, given the relentless rise of antisemitism. Before the October 7th terrorist attack on Israel, the JCRC was fielding countless calls every week about antisemitism at elementary, middle, and high schools in the area. Since then, antisemitism has exploded, and we have been bombarded with requests to address this

spike and explain the roots and manifestations of antisemitism. We run a high school peer educational program, bring holocaust survivors into schools, and have led countless workshops and webinars on antisemitism throughout Montgomery County. Yet, all of this is not enough. Our community is demanding more. More education. More resources. More funding. As Former Ambassador Deborah Lipstadt, Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism, has stated, “antisemitism is a virus that evolves and cannot be cured, but we can name it, condemn it, and then educate the community about history and hatred.”

There is no panacea or magic bullet to combating antisemitism, but enhanced teacher training is essential to empower educators to respond appropriately, and perhaps even prevent incidents from happening. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report for House Bill 71 With Amendments.