

Testimony in SUPPORT of HB485
Criminal Law - Hate Crimes - Penalty (Educate Against Hate Act)
Judiciary Committee
February 11, 2020

The Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington (JCRC) is the public affairs and community relations arm of the Jewish community, representing over 100 Jewish organizations and synagogues throughout Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia.

HB485 requires the court to impose, on a person convicted of a hate crime, at least eight hours of educational instruction relating to the group or community against whom the person convicted has committed a prohibited act. Similar legislation is pending in Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts already mandates diversity awareness training.

There is clearly a need for this type of education both for those who have committed hate crimes and to prevent the further manifestation of hate in our society, since polarization, anti-Semitism, racism and bigotry are at historic levels in our nation. Before re-entering society, those who have committed hate crimes, deserve the opportunity to be educated about the irrationality of group based hatred, the harm it causes, and to understand that respect for people of all backgrounds and creating communities that are inclusive must be a goal of American society.

For these reasons, we support House Bill 485. We understand that the Department and other stakeholders may want to develop the educational program and promulgate the directive for its implementation based on their knowledge and understanding of what might work best in Maryland, versus what other states

have done. We would support any changes/recommendations that take that into account while maintaining the overall intent of this legislation.

We thank Delegate Vaughn Stewart for introducing this important legislation and appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 485 today. We urge the House Judiciary Committee to vote favorably on this legislation.