



**Testimony in SUPPORT of *House Bill 290 – Hate Crimes – Civil Remedy***  
**Judiciary Committee**  
**February 2, 2022**

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 organizations, synagogues, and social services agencies throughout Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The JCRC is strongly committed to cultivating a society based on freedom, justice, and pluralism. We work throughout the region to advocate for our agencies that serve the most vulnerable residents and to campaign for important policy interests on behalf of the Jewish community and all Marylanders. The JCRC is focused on promoting social justice and intergroup relations and combating antisemitism and all forms of hatred.

In our ongoing effort to strengthen Maryland's hate crimes laws, the JCRC supports House Bill 290-- Hate Crimes -- Civil Remedy. Hate crimes and bias incidents against the Jewish community continue to rise at an alarming rate. Antisemitism is one of the oldest forms of hatred and Maryland is not immune to such attacks at his schools and houses of worship. The very recent hostage crisis at a Texas synagogue is yet another disturbing reminder of how critical it is to fight against antisemitism. FBI's Hate Crime Statistics indicate that the majority of all religious-based hate crimes in our country are against the Jewish community. Although Jews only represent 2% of the population, they constitute 60% of all anti-religious hate or bias crimes. Furthermore, according to the ADL, incidents and threats against Jews in Maryland showed a dramatic rise- up 135% - from the previous year.

House Bill 290 authorizes a person who is aggrieved by an act that would constitute a violation of the State's hate crime laws to bring a civil action against the person or persons who committed the act and authorizes a court to award a variety of specified remedies. Those remedies include awarding economic damages, noneconomic damages, such as pain and suffering, emotional distress, mental anguish, loss of enjoyment, and loss of companionship. House Bill 290 also includes punitive damages awarded to the Attorney General bringing the civil action, and reasonable attorney's fees and court costs to the prevailing plaintiff or the Attorney General. Although the State of Maryland already has strong state crimes laws, for these reasons, we ask this committee to give a favorable report on HB 290.