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THINK JEWISHLY. ACT LOCALLY.

TESTIMONY ON HBI 46 - POSITION: FAVORABLE

Education – Reportable Offenses and Student Discipline – Alterations

TO: Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and members of the Ways and Means Committee

FROM: Anita Lampel, on behalf of Jews United for Justice (JUFJ)

My name is Anita Lampel. I am a resident of District 16. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Jews United for Justice in support of HBI 46, Education – Reportable Offenses and Student Discipline – Alterations. JUFJ organizes 6,000 Jews and allies from across Maryland in support of local social, racial, and economic justice campaigns.

Jewish belief holds that all people are created in the divine image and that the destruction of a life is akin to destroying the world. Yet, suspensions and expulsions from school regularly destroy the lives of children.

As a psychologist, I worked on juvenile justice issues for forty years in California school districts and the court, including probation services. When I moved to Maryland, a thriving state with a richly diverse community, I expected to find superb services for struggling youth. But Maryland has one of the worst records on juvenile justice in the United States and an active school to prison pipeline. Current law allows for a young person who is only accused of a crime to be suspended or expelled from school for an alleged act that occurred off campus. HBI 46 will end this harmful practice.

Suspension or expulsion increases the drop-out rate thirty percent or more, only increasing the risk to the child and the community. Young people who are suspended or expelled only get into more trouble. (*The Link Between Suspensions, Expulsions, and Dropout Rates, Elizabeth Pulfall Jones, Ph.D America's Promise.Org., Sept. 5, 2018*) We need expanded alternative educational programs, like the Blair Ewing Center in Montgomery County, to address the needs of students, not the continuation of an exclusionary program that dumps our children onto the streets.

In California, one of the young people I worked with had killed her newborn child. Another child got into a fight off campus and caused traumatic injury. Both of these students, as well as many others, received support, guidance, and education instead of being expelled. They were not cut adrift by their schools and their government. By continuing their education while also receiving

the services they needed, they were able to live full functioning adult lives and contribute to society. HBI46 will allow for Maryland youth to experience the same.

This bill will dramatically improve outcomes for our youth. **On behalf of Jews United for Justice, I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HBI46.**