



**Testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 842 – Maryland Holocaust Remembrance Day
Education, Energy and Environment Committee
March 3, 2023**

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 on a non-sectarian basis and to campaign for important policy interests on behalf of the Jewish community and all Marylanders.

In our ongoing effort to address the alarming rise of antisemitism and to strengthen Holocaust education throughout the State, the JCRC supports Senate Bill 842. The Bill establishes an annual Maryland Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27. The day is not arbitrary; it marks the liberation of the largest Nazi death camp, Auschwitz-Birkenau, on this day in 1945. The date also coincides with the UN's International Holocaust Remembrance Day. The purpose is not only to commemorate the six million Jews and millions of others murdered, but also to promote Holocaust Education, in an effort to prevent future genocides.

Unfortunately, a recent survey found that two-thirds of Americans between 18 and 39 did not know that six million Jews were murdered in the Holocaust. Fifty percent could not name a single concentration camp, and nearly twenty-five percent thought the Holocaust was a myth or exaggerated. At the JCRC, Holocaust remembrance and education is one of our most sacred and critical responsibilities. Every year we hold a highly recognized annual Holocaust Remembrance service. We also regularly bring local survivors to our schools to meet with students and teachers. These efforts are necessary but not sufficient. Despite our educational outreach, antisemitism is at an all-time high leaving Jewish families feeling unsafe in their neighborhoods and students targeted in their schools. SB 842 will supplement and amplify educational initiatives like ours.

There is no panacea to prevent the rise of antisemitism or increase knowledge about the Holocaust. However, SB 842, which establishes Maryland Holocaust Remembrance Day, is a concrete step against ignorance, intolerance, and hatred. It is only through empathy and understanding of our past that we can secure a more just present and future for our children. For these reasons, we ask for a favorable report on SB 842.