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**WRITTEN TESTIMONY**

**Senate Bill 5 – Hate Crimes – Civil Remedy**

**Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**January 31, 2023**

**SUPPORT**

**MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS**

Adat Chaim Congregation  
 American Jewish Committee  
 Americans for Peace Now  
 Baltimore Chapter  
 American Israel Public Affairs Committee  
 American Red Magen David for Israel  
 American Zionist Movement  
 Amit Women  
 Association of Reform Zionists of America  
 Baltimore Board of Rabbis  
 Baltimore Hebrew Congregation  
 Baltimore Jewish Green and Just Alliance  
 Baltimore Men's ORT  
 Baltimore Zionist District  
 Beth Am Congregation  
 Beth El Congregation  
 Beth Israel Congregation  
 Beth Shalom Congregation of  
 Howard County  
 Beth Tfiloh Congregation  
 B'nai B'rith, Chesapeake Bay Region  
 B'nai Israel Congregation  
 B'nai Jacob Shaarei Zion Congregation  
 Bolton Street Synagogue  
 Chevra Ahavas Chesed, Inc.  
 Chevrei Tzedek Congregation  
 Chizuk Amuno Congregation  
 Congregation Beit Tikvah  
 Congregation Tiferes Yisroel  
 Federation of Jewish Women's  
 Organizations of Maryland  
 Hadassah  
 Har Sinai - Oheb Shalom Congregation  
 J Street  
 Jewish Federation of Howard County  
 Jewish Labor Committee  
 Jewish War Veterans  
 Jewish War Veterans, Ladies Auxiliary  
 Jewish Women International  
 Jews For Judaism  
 Moses Montefiore Anshe Emunah  
 Hebrew Congregation  
 National Council of Jewish Women  
 Ner Tamid Congregation  
 Rabbinical Council of America  
 Religious Zionists of America  
 Shaarei Tfiloh Congregation  
 Shomrei Eemunah Congregation  
 Suburban Orthodox Congregation  
 Temple Beth Shalom  
 Temple Isaiah  
 Zionist Organization of America  
 Baltimore District

**Background:** Senate Bill 5 (SB5) allows a hate crime victim to bring a civil action against the person or persons who committed the crime. While common law allows for such action, SB5 codifies the common law. Further, the bill would clarify the common-law option for awarding reasonable attorney's fees for hate crimes. Lastly, the bill would allow for treble damages, an enhanced monetary penalty awarded for egregious crimes.

**Written Comments:** The Baltimore Jewish Council and Maryland's Jewish community are concerned about the recent rise in hate/bias incidents in Maryland and the damaging effect that is having on our communities. These incidents are impacting not just Jewish communities, but those of many of our other faith partners. According to the 2021 State of Maryland Hate/Bias Report authored by the Maryland State Police, Maryland experienced an average of 385 hate bias incidents each year from 2019 – 2021. These reported incidents targeted both individuals and some of our most vital arenas for community engagement, including schools, community centers, and places of worship. No place, person, or part of our state is immune to these kinds of hateful incidents. SB5 would serve as both a deterrent to committing hate crimes as well as a symbol to the especially vile nature behind them.

Over 30 other states have already codified civil actions for hate crimes. Maryland should follow in their steps so that a person or persons who are aggrieved by a violation of our hate crime laws can bring a civil action with enhanced financial penalties against the perpetrator of the crime.

With this in mind, the Baltimore Jewish Council urges a favorable report of SB5.

*The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.*