



Testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 1 –
Criminal Law - Wearing, Carrying, or Transporting Firearms - Restrictions
(Gun Safety Act of 2023)
Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 7, 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 social service agencies, synagogues, and Jewish schools in the region. The JCRC advocates on issues that are critical to the Jewish community and all Marylanders, including the most vulnerable. We have a long history of supporting gun safety measures and legislation that protects our children and all community members from the perils of gun violence. Given this commitment, the JCRC supports Senate Bill 1 – The Gun Safety Act of 2023, which aims to reduce the dramatic rise in gun violence. SB 1 prohibits a person from knowingly wearing, carrying, or transporting a firearm onto the real property of another unless the other has given certain permission to the person or the public generally. The Bill also prohibits a person from knowingly wearing, carrying, or transporting a firearm within 100 feet of a place of public accommodation.

At the JCRC one of our highest priorities is the security of our agencies and synagogues given the spike in antisemitism - up 34% in the U.S. and 17% in Maryland from the previous year. Additionally, in Montgomery County, religious bias incidents show that more than 85% target Jews, although they make up only 10% of the County. Recently, there has been a rash of disturbing antisemitic incidents in Montgomery County including assaulting a man wearing a Jewish star outside of a grocery store, a high school sign being defaced to say, “Jews are not welcome here”, and a horrific act of vandalism on the Bethesda Trolley Trail with a drawing of people hanging from nooses and the words, “No Mercy for Jews.” The Jewish community also remembers the Tree of Life tragedy where 11 synagogue members were murdered in 2018.

The importance of this legislation at this time cannot be underestimated. The JCRC is deeply disappointed by the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling striking down NY’s concealed weapon permit law. We believe it will pose increased risk to public safety. Synagogues should be left to establish their own security plans; in fact, every synagogue has a detailed security plan that includes law enforcement professionals. We do not want individuals walking in off the street with a weapon acting in their own capacity. It could lead to chaos and create an even more potentially deadly situation. We know that today’s senseless violence can only be stemmed by limiting easy access weapons. While the Supreme Court has taken a step backward to curb violence and ensure safety, we are grateful that in Maryland, our leaders are taking a step forward to counter this dangerous trend. Fewer guns near or inside our Jewish institutions will create a safer environment for all of our residents. For these reasons, the JCRC supports SB 1.

