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 Baltimore Chapter
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 Rabbinical Council of America
 Religious Zionists of America
 Shaarei Tfiloh Congregation
 Shomrei Emunah Congregation
 Suburban Orthodox Congregation
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 Zionist Organization of America
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WRITTEN TESTIMONY

**House Bill 537 - Income Tax - Credit for Nonpublic School Student Bus
 Transportation Expenses**

Budget and Taxation Committee

February 8, 2024

SUPPORT

Background: House Bill 537, (HB537) would establish a refundable income tax credit for parents for the cost of daily bus transportation for their child to or from a nonpublic school that participates in the Nonpublic Schools Textbook and Technology Grants Program. The maximum value of the tax credit would be \$1,500 per a student. HB537 is a result of the *Task Force to Study Nonpublic Student Bus Transportation* which recommended that the state provide an income tax credit to help cover the cost of nonpublic school student transportation.

Written Comments: The Baltimore Jewish Council supports excellence in education. Area Jewish Day schools educate more than 8,000 students. Many of these students walk to school every day on busy roads, including Park Heights Avenue, because they do not have access to other transportation. This is a serious safety issue, not only because young children are walking on unsafe streets, but because many of these children are visibly Jewish. There have unfortunately been incidents of hate crimes and hate bias incidents in our community on roads like Park Heights Avenue where Jewish people have been both verbally and physically assaulted. The BJC is concerned about the sudden and extreme increase in antisemitism and the potential safety implications it has for visibly Jewish students walking to school. HB537 would help provide a safe transportation option for students in our community.

Further, The Baltimore Jewish Council and The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore are committed to repairing our world. We represent The Pearlstone Center in Reisterstown, MD, a conference center and farm that employs and teaches sustainable practices. If enacted, HB537 would mean fewer cars on the road, and less stalling in front of school and wasted gas, all of which would have a positive impact on the environment.

For these reasons, the Baltimore Jewish Council asks for a favorable report on HB537.

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

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the interests of the Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.

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