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TESTIMONY OF SENATOR SHELLY HETTLEMAN

**SB 847 – HIGHER EDUCATION – ANTIHATE AND ANTIDISCRIMINATION POLICIES AND
WORKGROUP (MARYLAND CAMPUS ACCOUNTABILITY AND MODERNIZATION TO
PROTECT UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ACT)**

SB 847, the Maryland Campus Accountability and Modernization to Protect University Students Act, takes a proactive and necessary approach to combating hate, discrimination, and violence in Maryland's institutions of higher education by ensuring that our colleges and universities adopt clear, enforceable policies to protect students, faculty, and staff from racial, ethnic, and religious harassment and intimidation.

The urgency of this legislation is clear. Hate crimes and bias incidents have risen sharply in recent years on college campuses and across Maryland, threatening the safety and well-being of students from Jewish, Muslim, Black, Asian, LGBTQ+, and other historically marginalized communities. According to statistics from the Justice Department, our state continues to see an alarming number of hate-based incidents, many of which occur in educational settings <https://www.justice.gov/hatecrimes/state-data/maryland>. No student should have to fear for their safety and well-being while pursuing an education.

SB 847 increases education institutional accountability by requiring colleges and universities to:

- Adopt comprehensive antihate and antidiscrimination policies to address racial, ethnic, and religious violence, harassment, and intimidation.
- Establish clear procedures for reporting, investigating, and addressing complaints to ensure transparency and fairness.
- Provide faculty and administrators with training on how to respond in real-time to hate incidents in classrooms and on campus.

Beyond enforcement, SB 847 promotes education and prevention. The bill mandates annual collaborative campus meetings with student organizations, ensuring that students have a voice

in addressing concerns and shaping policies. This encourages a culture of open communication, transparency, and continuous improvement.

Hate-driven threats and violence create a climate of fear and exclusion, making it harder for students to focus on learning. SB847 strengthens campus security measures by requiring institutions to work closely with law enforcement to develop response protocols and ensure campus security collaborates with students and community groups to protect organizations and individuals targeted by hate crimes or threats.

Additionally, the bill establishes the Campus Community Grant Program, allocating \$500,000 in funding for intergroup and interfaith initiatives. These grants will support student-led efforts to build understanding, foster unity, and create a more inclusive campus environment.

At its core, SB 847 is about protecting all students. It instructs the convening of the Workgroup on Combating Antisemitism, Islamophobia, and Other Forms of Hate to develop model policies and security recommendations to ensure Maryland remains a leader in combating campus hate and discrimination. This legislation is measured, proactive, and essential to the safety, inclusion, and success of every student in our state. No student, even those who do not belong to a historically discriminated group, stand to benefit when the threat of discrimination and hate can run unimpeded through our higher education institutions.

With this bill, Maryland has the opportunity to set a national standard for campus safety, free expression, and inclusion, not just for any one group, but for all students who have been historically targeted by hate and discrimination. This is why I urge a favorable report on SB 847 to ensure that every student, regardless of race, ethnicity, or religion, can pursue their education free from fear, discrimination, and violence.