



Testimony in SUPPORT of *Senate Bill 916 –*
Education - Curriculum Standards – Antihate and Holocaust Education
(Educate to Stop the Hate Act) –
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 5, 2025

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 and synagogues throughout Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The JCRC is strongly committed to cultivating a society based on mutual respect, justice, and equity. 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.

Senate Bill 916 requires that the State Board of Education develop curriculum standards and resources for antihate and Holocaust education. The Bill applies to elementary, middle and high school classrooms in all public and nonpublic schools that receive state funding. Additionally, the curriculum would include utilizing historical contexts that have led to contemporary racism and prejudice and the Holocaust. It also will revise the high school history framework to include the contributions of historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups.

We are living in a time of heightened hate where every marginalized community seems to be under attack. Senate Bill 916 is a critical piece of legislation to combat such hatred. Students of all ages need to understand history, including bigotry and prejudice, so that horrific events of the past - like the Holocaust - will never be repeated. We are grateful that in the last year, the Maryland State Department of Education's Educate to Stop the Hate Committee has recommended improvements to the Social Studies curriculum. In fact, several JCRC suggestions have been incorporated such as including the Holocaust when talking about authoritarian regimes in the 1900s, including antisemitism when discussing the Bubonic Plague, and when analyzing cultural norms in the 1920s, discussing perpetuating various forms of discrimination such as antisemitism.

While we recognize the importance of these curriculum changes, the JCRC also supports codifying Holocaust Education, especially as antisemitism continues to rise to unacceptable and unprecedented levels. According to the ADL, Maryland ranked 7th in the nation for the highest number of antisemitic incidents, and since October 7th, 2023, there has been a 300% increase in antisemitic incidents, many of these in Montgomery County Public Schools. SB 916 is not a panacea, but it certainly is a necessary step to help stem the tide and fight back against the

harmful impact of hatred which undermines the very fabric of our society. For these reasons, we ask for a favorable report on SB 916.