

March 3, 2025

Chair Brian J. Feldman
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Testimony OPPOSING SB0847 CAMPUS ACT

I am a Jewish Marylander writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 0847, the Maryland (CAMPUS) Campus Accountability and Modernization to Protect University Students Act.

While I appreciate the bill's intention to combat discrimination and hate-based violence on college campuses, I am deeply concerned that certain provisions within this legislation threaten the fundamental right to free speech and could be used to suppress student activism, particularly around issues of social justice and human rights.

One of the most troubling aspects of SB0847 is the mandated adoption of time, place, and manner policies for expressive conduct. Though such policies may appear neutral on their face, they often serve to disproportionately restrict marginalized voices — especially students advocating for human rights, racial justice, and other movements critical of government policies or institutional practices. Time, place, and manner restrictions create an onerous and confusing process that discourages student activists from exercising their free speech rights and creates opportunities for students engaging in disfavored speech to be punished for minor technical violations.

By empowering institutions to involve campus security or law enforcement in response to what is vaguely defined as "significant disruptions," this bill could create a chilling effect on student activism, deterring participation in peaceful protests out of fear of punishment or surveillance.

Additionally, the requirement for institutions to hold meetings exclusively with "approved student organizations" risks creating an exclusionary dynamic that silences independent student groups or those critical of administrative decisions. This approach threatens to institutionalize favoritism, giving disproportionate influence to organizations deemed acceptable by administrators while sidelining grassroots movements.

Mandates on university administrators like those included in this bill incentivize overreach, pre-emptive censorship, and other harms due to administrators being justifiably concerned about penalties their

university may face if there is any question of their adherence to the mandates.

Efforts to combat hate, harassment, and intimidation are essential, but they must not come at the cost of infringing on students' constitutional rights to free speech and assembly. Instead of advancing campus safety, SB0847 has the troubling potential to foster an environment of censorship and repression.

I urge the committee to oppose this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Eric Hiller
Towson, Maryland