



Maryland General Assembly
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 5, 2025

Testimony of Meredith R. Weisel
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ADL (the Anti-Defamation League) is pleased to submit this testimony in **support of Senate Bill 847, Higher Education – Antihate and Antidiscrimination Policies and Workgroup (Maryland Campus Accountability and Modernization to Protect University Students Act)**, which will help counter the rising tide of antisemitism on our college and university campuses.

As you may know, ADL is a leading anti-hate organization founded in 1913 with a mission to “stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all.” Today, ADL continues to fight all forms of antisemitism and bias, using innovation and partnerships to drive impact. A global leader in combating antisemitism, countering extremism and battling bigotry wherever and whenever it happens, ADL works to ensure a just and inclusive society for all.

We are facing a troubling rise in antisemitism, particularly on college and university campuses. During the 2023-2024 academic year, ADL recorded over 1,400 antisemitic incidents on campuses across the nation. On numerous occasions, disturbing rhetoric escalated into aggressive actions, as protests morphed into encampments that included calls for universities to cut ties with Jewish institutions and were frequently sites of harassment against Jewish people on campus. These activities created an environment of fear and hostility for Jewish students and faculty.

Further, ADL in partnership with Hillel International and College Pulse fielded a survey of college students at 135 universities across the United States. According to the survey, 83% of Jewish college students have experienced or witnessed antisemitism firsthand since the October 7 attack. 41% of Jewish students felt the need to hide their Jewish identity and one-in-four felt compelled to take security precautions. The most alarming statistic is that two-thirds of Jewish students lack confidence in their university’s ability to prevent antisemitic incidents. That is why bills like **SB847** are so crucial in this current environment.

There have been a number of concerning antisemitic incidents on Maryland’s campuses, particularly in the wake of the October 7 terrorist attack. In April 2024, at an anti-Israel encampment at the University of Maryland, College Park, protesters displayed the logo of the U.S.-designated terror group Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). In September 2024, four visibly Jewish students were harassed while walking to the campus Hillel by an individual who said, “F*** you Jews” and “Christ is king, f*** you Jews, you killed Jesus.” That

same month, a car parked in front of a Jewish sorority house displayed the message "Hamas responding to never-ending crime against Palestinians."

In May 2024, at Towson University, a student asked a fellow classmate wearing a Star of David necklace if they were Jewish, and after the student said yes, they stated, "Go f*** yourself" and "Israel shouldn't exist." Also in May 2024, during a lecture at Towson University, a professor made several antisemitic statements, including, "Jews are too defensive about the Holocaust and antisemitism."

The alarming and extreme proliferation of antisemitism on college campuses in Maryland and across the country has contributed to an explosive rise of antisemitic and anti-Jewish hatred that ADL has been tracking across society. Campus administrators have proven ill-equipped in many cases to effectively put mechanisms and strategies in place to counter the environments of hostility and intimidation targeting their Jewish students. It is clear administrators need help and structures put in place to protect their Jewish students and address the epidemic of antisemitism on their college campuses. HB1462 does just this.

Additionally, ADL understands and tracks the dangerous proximity between the normalization of antisemitism (or any kind of hate) and acts of physical violence. As antisemitism becomes more emboldened because of the current inability by campuses to effectively push back, there is less and less distance between that hatred and a physical or violent manifestation of it. We need to put checks in place so that campuses can respond effectively, and interrupt the cycle of rising antisemitism before it leads to even worse tragedy.

Campuses should be places where all students feel welcome and are able to learn in a safe and nurturing environment. Through SB847, the Maryland legislature is demonstrating the leadership and guidance campuses so desperately need in this moment where Jewish students, faculty and administrators feel targeted and unsafe to openly express their Jewish identity. ADL strongly supports SB847.

**We urge the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee to give
Senate Bill 847 a favorable report.**