



Maryland General Assembly
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
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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 435, *Institutions of Higher Education and Elementary and Secondary Schools – Title VI Coordinators (Remove Discrimination in Education Act)***, which requires all institutions of higher education and local school systems within the state to designate a Title VI Coordinator to ensure compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

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 and in our K-12 schools. 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. According to ADL’s Audit of Antisemitic Incidents, in 2023, Maryland had 129 antisemitic K-12 school incidents—a 461% increase from 2022 and the fourth highest state for K-12 incidents in the country.

Further, ADL in partnership with Hillel International and College Pulse fielded a survey of college students at 135 universities across the United States. The results were reported on Thursday, January 30th and noted that 83% of Jewish college students have experienced or witnessed antisemitism firsthand since the October 7th 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 **SB435** are so crucial in this current environment.

Title VI states that “no person in the United States shall, on the basis of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” This includes discrimination based on a group’s actual or perceived shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics. A

hostile environment exists if the harassment denies or limits a student's ability to participate in or benefit from the institution's educational programs and activities.

Colleges and universities must take prompt action that is reasonably calculated to end the harassment, eliminate the hostile environment, and prevent the harassment from recurring, or they risk violating Title VI. However, students are not always aware of these protections under Title VI, or how to engage them effectively. At the same time, colleges and universities may not be equipped to comply with Title VI and ensure that all students are protected from discrimination and harassment.

SB435 seeks to address this issue by requiring each State institution of higher learning and local school systems to designate a Title VI Coordinator. This Coordinator would be tasked with overseeing compliance with Title VI, providing training and educational resources regarding Title VI laws and regulations, and documenting and investigating complaints. This individual would serve a purpose similar to a Title IX Coordinator.

In fact, the University of Maryland has already hired a designated Title VI coordinator. **SB435** would encourage other state universities to follow suit.

**We urge the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee to give
Senate Bill 435 a favorable report.**