



## Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 0847

Date: 3/3/2025

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Submitted by: Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA)

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Honorable Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

My name is Eli Berne, and I am the State Director at the Jewish Federations of North America. Jewish Federations represents 146 Jewish Federations across North America, including three here in Maryland. On behalf of the Jewish Federations of North America, I am pleased to offer our strong support for Senate Bill 0847, the *Maryland Campus Accountability and Modernization to Protect University Students Act*. This bill provides a critical framework for combating antisemitism and other forms of hate, harassment, and discrimination on Maryland's college and university campuses. We are deeply committed to ensuring the safety, dignity, and security of Jewish students on campuses, where they must be free from fear of violence or intimidation due to their identity. Passage of this bill, which is being supported by Jewish Federations both locally and nationally, will solidify Maryland's status as a model state and a leader in the fight against antisemitism on college campuses.

Antisemitism, along with other forms of racial, ethnic, and religious hatred, has regrettably been on the rise, particularly in academic settings. This bill's comprehensive approach addresses these troubling trends in a meaningful and actionable way. We believe the measures contained in HB 1462 will provide the tools needed to protect all students, and especially Jewish students, who unfortunately have had to deal with the acute rise in antisemitism firsthand.

One of the most vital aspects of this bill is the requirement for higher education institutions to adopt, enforce, and submit policies to combat racial, ethnic, and religious violence, harassment, and intimidation. These policies are essential to protect Jewish students from antisemitic acts and ensure that institutions take a proactive stance against hate. The bill also calls for training for faculty, administrators, and staff on appropriate responses to hate incidents, which is crucial for creating a safe environment. This training will help ensure that members of the campus community are well-equipped to respond to antisemitism when it arises, making it clear that such behavior will not be tolerated.

In addition to these policies, the bill's inclusion of time, place, and manner policies will help balance the protection of free speech with the need to prevent disruptions driven by hate. By



establishing clear guidelines for expressive activities on campuses, it will help ensure that Jewish students are not subjected to harm or intimidation during protests, events, or other expressions of political and social beliefs. This balance is important to protecting both the right to free speech and the right to a safe and inclusive learning environment.

We also strongly support the creation of a specialized workgroup to combat antisemitism, Islamophobia, and other forms of racial and religious hate. As recent incidents have demonstrated, antisemitism is a growing concern that must be addressed with a focused and strategic approach. The workgroup will bring together experts, university administrators, and student organizations to develop best practices and policies for combating hate on campuses. This collaboration will be instrumental in ensuring that universities are well-equipped to confront antisemitism and other forms of discrimination when they arise.

Furthermore, we strongly support the provision requiring annual reports from higher education institutions on incidents of harassment, or intimidation specifically in regards to antisemitism. These reports will provide transparency, allowing the state to monitor trends and identify areas in need of intervention. The data will be instrumental in understanding the scope and nature of antisemitism on campuses, helping to ensure that proactive measures are put in place to address these issues before they escalate.

Finally, we are particularly encouraged by the establishment of the Campus Community Grant Program. This program will support initiatives aimed at fostering intergroup and interfaith dialogue, which is essential for building mutual respect and understanding among students from diverse backgrounds. The Jewish Federations of North America have long advocated for efforts that promote cooperation and understanding between Jewish students and their peers, and we are confident that this program will help reduce division and create a more inclusive campus culture.

Senate Bill 0847 represents a vital opportunity to combat antisemitism, discrimination, and violence on Maryland's college campuses. We are encouraged by the comprehensive and thoughtful approach taken in this legislation, which not only addresses immediate concerns but also fosters a culture of respect and safety for the future. The Jewish Federations of North America strongly urge the committee to support this bill, as it will undoubtedly contribute to creating a safer environment for Jewish students and all members of the campus community.

Sincerely,

Eli Berne

State Director, Government Relations

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