



Testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 435 – *Institutions of Higher Education and Elementary and Secondary Schools – Title VI Coordinators (Remove Discrimination in Education Act)*
Education, Energy, and the Environment
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 social service agencies, synagogues, and schools throughout Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The JCRC is strongly committed to cultivating a society based on mutual respect, justice, equity and safety. We work throughout the region to advocate for our nonprofits that serve the most vulnerable on a non-sectarian basis and to campaign for important policy interests on behalf of the Jewish community and all Marylanders.

The JCRC supports Senate Bill 435, Remove Discrimination in Education Act. This Bill requires all higher education and local schools to appoint a Title VI Coordinator to ensure compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to prevent discrimination based on race, color or national origin. This Coordinator would be responsible for overseeing equal access to programming on campus, documenting and investigating complaints, and providing training and resources about Title VI law and regulations.

The need for this bill could not be more urgent given the unprecedented and unacceptable rise of antisemitism in the US, especially targeting Jewish students. According to the ADL, Maryland ranked 7th in the nation for the highest number of antisemitic incidents. And since Oct. 7th, there has been a 300% increase in antisemitic incidents, with violent protests on many campuses. A very recent AJC study showed that more than a third of American Jewish college students reported experiencing antisemitism at least once during their time on campus. Free speech must always be protected, but students should never be harassed, threatened or bullied because of their Jewish identity.

At the JCRC, our top priority is combating antisemitism and protecting the safety and security of the Jewish people, including Jewish students whether at our local schools or college campuses. In Montgomery County, our agency took the lead in addressing antisemitism at Montgomery County Community College (MCCC). We worked closely with the college president and administration to call out professors who were spewing hateful rhetoric. Since then, we have led trainings on antisemitism and beefed up Jewish and interfaith programming. The JCRC also has been on the frontlines confronting the spike in antisemitism at Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). We have trained thousands of educators in MCPS on Jewish identity and

antisemitism and been a critical resource for schools with significant numbers of Jewish students and faculty.

Senate Bill 435 would have been a huge asset to both MCPS and MCCC had it been in place last fall. No one should be targeted because of who they are or what they believe in, especially in the classroom or on campus. With a dedicated Title VI Coordinator, schools can stay in compliance with the law and reinforce the fundamental right to an education free from bias, hate and intimidation. The bill strengthens protections, ensures accountability and fosters a safer, more inclusive learning environment for all students. For these reasons, we support Senate Bill 435 and ask for a favorable report.