



**Baltimore Jewish Council**

*An agency of The Associated*

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## WRITTEN TESTIMONY

### House Bill 521 - State Procurement - Commercial

### Nondiscrimination Policy – Antisemitism

### Health and Government Operations Committee

February 18, 2025

### Support

**Background:** This legislation would add an established and commonly accepted definition of antisemitism to Maryland's procurement law. This aims to ensure that when procurement officials evaluate whether business entities have discriminated based on religion, ancestry, or national origin, they have a clear and specific definition of what constitutes antisemitism.

**Written Comments:** The Baltimore Jewish Council (BJC) represents The Associated: Jewish Federation of Baltimore and all its agencies and programs, as well as the organized Jewish Community of Baltimore. A frequent challenge of fighting antisemitism is that officials who are charged with combatting hate have difficulty defining what antisemitism is. We have encountered this within state and local government, as well as at all levels of education.

The definition proposed in this bill – developed by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) – provides a comprehensive and internationally recognized framework to delineate and address contemporary manifestations of antisemitism. It is also a consensus definition with bipartisan support, which is critical for effective policy implementation. More than 1,200 entities around the world have adopted or endorsed the IHRA definition. It has also been formally adopted by at least 35 U.S. states, 91 American cities and municipalities, the U.S. State Department, and President Biden's National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism.

Adding this definition to Maryland's procurement laws will ensure that antisemitism is properly considered as part of the state's efforts to not to enter into a contract with any business entity that has engaged in discrimination.

**For these reasons, we ask for a favorable report on HB521.**

*The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of the Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.*