



**Testimony in SUPPORT of *House Bill 521* –  
*State Procurement – Commercial Nondiscrimination Policy - Antisemitism*  
Health and Government Operations Committee  
February 18, 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 organizations and synagogues throughout Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The JCRC is strongly committed to cultivating a society based on freedom, justice, and pluralism. We work throughout the region to advocate for our agencies that serve the most vulnerable residents and to campaign for important policy interests on behalf of the Jewish community and all Marylanders.

House Bill 521 ensures that state procurements are not engaged in any form of discrimination including antisemitism, specifically the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism which states, “Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews”. This definition also confirms strict adherence to free speech rights and principles. Additionally, HB 521 is not limited to only bidders on state contracts but also includes subcontractors and suppliers.

Given the unprecedented rise in antisemitism across the country and here in Maryland, which ranks number seven in the nation for the most antisemitic incidents, the JCRC strongly supports the IHRA definition of antisemitism. Several years ago, we successfully lobbied for the Montgomery County Council to endorse this “gold standard” definition of antisemitism. The Obama, Trump and Biden administrations have all endorsed this definition along with dozens of other countries, 37 states, and countless city and county governments. We believe this definition can be utilized as an effective tool in understanding and combating antisemitism without impinging on free speech rights of the First Amendment. It is critically important to ensure that state procurement contracts do not engage in antisemitism. For these reasons, we ask for a favorable report on HB 521.