

Montgomery County Jewish Collective Testimony in Opposition to SB0709

Dear Honorable Chair Smith and members of the Maryland Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:

The [Montgomery County Jewish Collective \(MCJC\)](#) is a community of Jews in Montgomery County, Maryland who are committed to collective liberation as the cornerstone of a vibrant, safe, and supportive Jewish community.

We are providing this testimony to state our opposition to SB0709.

The Maryland bills that are cross-posted as SB0709 and HB1081 would infringe on free speech and expression, will not actually address antisemitism or racism, and will have a chilling effect on the wearing of masks for public health reasons, even with the supposed "carve out."

We are aware that the language in the bills prohibit "intentionally harassing, intimidating, or threatening another person while hiding or concealing their face. However, this is so vague that absolutely anything could be determined to be "intimidating" or "harassing," including normal protest behavior like chanting, singing, marching, etc. The sponsors of the bill know that many protestors choose to hide their identities because we live in a country that often criminalizes protest despite our First Amendment rights. And the sponsors must know that if these bills become law, they will be used against Black, muslim, and other minority populations at a much higher rate.

These bills are embarrassing and are unbecoming of Maryland and frankly anywhere in the United States. We understand that they are meant to assuage those who are upset and uncomfortable about protests against the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. But causing discomfort does not equal antisemitism, and the introduction of such bills that will lead to the chilling of free speech and the weaponization of law enforcement against certain populations is unconscionable.

Thank you for your time. We welcome any opportunity to meet to share our concerns and provide you more information about our group.

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