



**Testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill 1308 –  
Crime of Violence – Medical Facilities and Places of Worship - Penalty  
(Sacred Places Safety Act)  
Judiciary Committee  
March 11. 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 agencies, synagogues and schools throughout the region. The JCRC is strongly committed to cultivating a society based on justice, mutual respect, equity and safety. We advocate on behalf of our social service agencies, which serve the most vulnerable on a non-sectarian basis. We also campaign for important policy interests on behalf of the Jewish community and all Marylanders.

The JCRC supports House Bill 1308, the Sacred Places Safety Act, which prohibits a person from committing a crime of violence while in a medical facility or place of worship. Additionally, any violation would be considered a felony and subject to imprisonment of up to 10 years. Our synagogues must remain safe and welcoming to all and our First Amendment right to religious liberty must be upheld and protected.

One of the highest priorities of the JCRC is protecting the safety and security of our worshippers. For years, we have successfully advocated for security grants in Maryland including the Protecting Against Hate Crimes (PAHC) grant which provides funding to harden facilities and pay for security personnel. The Jewish community in Maryland is facing an onslaught of hatred, with antisemitic incidents skyrocketing since the October 7<sup>th</sup> Hamas attack in Israel. We must take every measure at our disposal, including HB 1308 to help protect us and enhance security.

The JCRC is committed to ensuring that congregants are able to practice their faith in a warm and welcoming environment and that our houses of worship serve as a source of strength, comfort and care. Sanctuaries are supposed to be holy spaces where we can gather and pray in safety and peace. This holy space can not be one of fear, danger, intimidation or violence. For these reasons, we ask for a favorable report on House Bill 1308.

