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Written Testimony
House Bill 1452- Hate Crimes and Hate Bias - Definitions of
Sexual Orientation and Hate Bias Incident
Judiciary Committee
March 6, 2025
Support

Background: House Bill 1452, (HB1452) would change the definition of sexual orientation under the hate crimes statute and create a definition of hate/bias incident so that the Department of State Police and local law enforcement collect data on hate bias incidents as well as hate crimes.

Written Comments: The Baltimore Jewish Council (BJC) represents The Associated: Jewish Federation of Baltimore, all of its agencies, as well as the organized Jewish Community of Greater Baltimore. We support HB1452 as it was a recommendation from The Maryland Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention. Every year the Maryland State Police publishes the State of Maryland Hate/Bias Report which collects data from local law enforcement jurisdictions about hate crimes and hate bias incidents. However, many jurisdictions under report or do not report hate/bias incidents. This bill will make it clear that local law enforcement needs to take reports of these incidents, even if they do not arise to a crime. According to the 2023 State of Maryland Hate/Bias Report authored by the Maryland State Police, Maryland experienced 951 reports, over a 100% increase from 2022. However, we know that this data is vastly underreported. We often hear about people calling the police in certain jurisdictions about a hate bias incident and being told that because a crime has not occurred that there is no report to be made. It is important for Maryland's law enforcement to not only track crimes but hate/bias incidents so we can better understand and respond to the nature of hate in our state.

For these reasons we ask for a favorable report on HB1452.

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.