



**Testimony in SUPPORT of *House Bill 1452–
Hate Crimes and Hate Bias – Definitions of Sexual Orientation
and Hate Bias Incident*
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 organizations, synagogues and schools throughout the region. The JCRC is strongly committed to cultivating a society based on justice, equity, mutual respect and safety. We work throughout the region to advocate for our agencies that serve the most vulnerable residents on a non-sectarian basis and to campaign for important policy interests on behalf of the Jewish community and all Marylanders.

The JCRC supports House Bill 1452 which updates the definition of "sexual orientation" to be more inclusive of a broader range of identities. The Bill also clarifies "hate bias incidents" so law enforcement and the community better understand what activity constitutes hate bias and needs to be reported yet is not a "hate crime". As a member of the Maryland Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention, I am proud to support HB 1452 as this legislation fulfills our goal to improve Maryland's response to hate crimes and bias incidents and to support all marginalized groups, however they define their sexual orientation. This clarity and expansion of definitions will help the Commission in its efforts to eradicate hate.

HB 1452 aligns strongly with the core values of the JCRC which has a long history of advocating for policies that oppose discrimination in all its forms as to race, color, religion or creed, sex, age, ancestry or national origin, marital status, physical or mental illnesses or chronic conditions, physical, intellectual and cognitive disabilities, sexual orientation, gender identity, or genetic information. All human beings are equal before God and should be equally treated under the law.

The JCRC firmly believes in the value of *derech eretz* – acting with common decency and honor – in our relationships with others as a necessary attribute of a diverse society that is based on mutual acceptance and respect. We therefore reiterate our commitment to enshrining and vigorously defending laws and public policies that afford all people, regardless of any distinguishing personal identity or characteristic, with individual security, dignity, and fair and equal opportunity. For these reasons, we ask for a favorable report on HB 1452.

