



Testimony in SUPPORT of *Senate Bill 177 – Criminal Law – Interference With Access to or Egress from a Religious Facility – Prohibition*
Judicial Proceedings Committee
January 20, 2026

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 social service agencies, synagogues, and schools throughout Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The JCRC is strongly committed to cultivating a society based on freedom, justice, equity, and pluralism. We work throughout the region to advocate for our nonprofits that serve the most vulnerable on a non-sectarian basis and to campaign for important policy interests on behalf of the Jewish community and all Marylanders.

The JCRC supports Senate Bill 177 which prohibits someone from blocking access to or from a religious facility including a place of worship, a cemetery, and a religious school, educational facility or community center. SB 177 also establishes a misdemeanor penalty up to 90 days in jail or a fine up to \$1000 dollars or both. The Bill does not prohibit free speech.

Since its founding in 1938, the JCRC's top priority has been protecting the safety and security of the Jewish Community in our region. To that end we work tirelessly to condemn and combat antisemitism – which is one of the oldest forms of hatred, and in recent times has reached unprecedented and unacceptable levels. Last May in Washington DC, two young people were murdered only because they were Jews outside of the Capital Jewish Museum. Since the 2023 Hamas attack on Israel, antisemitic and anti-Israel rhetoric and violent protests have turned deadly. Jews continue to be targeted and assaulted. In Maryland, the Jewish people comprise 4% of the population but 28.5 percent of hate bias incidents according to the 2024 Maryland State Police Bias Report. And according to the ADL, Maryland was number five in the country for the highest number per capita of antisemitic incidents.

Violent, strident antisemitic tactics underscore the importance of Senate Bill 177 to ensure that our community is safe whether it be at a synagogue, religious school, community center, or Hillel on campus. Since October 7th, 2023, we have seen demonstrators across the country aggressively block entrances to Jewish religious facilities instilling fear and intimidation. Most recently, outside of synagogues in New York City, police had to step up patrols to keep anti-Zionist groups away from congregants. This level of vitriol and hatred is dangerous and unacceptable. It cannot be tolerated in civil society. In our region, the JCRC has been on the frontlines of combatting antisemitism. We will continue to work to ensure not only the safety and security of our community but also the right to religious freedom including access to all our Jewish institutions. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report for Senate Bill 177.

