

HB1146\_RichardKaplowitz\_FAV  
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Richard Keith Kaplowitz  
Frederick, MD 21703-7134

**TESTIMONY ON HB#1146 - POSITION: FAVORABLE**

Crime of Violence - Medical Facilities and Places of Worship - Penalty (Sacred Places Safety Act)

**TO:** Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and members of the Judiciary Committee

**FROM:** Richard Keith Kaplowitz

**My name is Richard Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#1146 - Crime of Violence - Medical Facilities and Places of Worship - Penalty (Sacred Places Safety Act)**

The fraught political climate and endorsement of political violence by the Federal government, as demonstrated in the complete pardon of the January 6th defendants, has increased the danger to medical facilities and places of worship. Persons aggravated by what they perceive as happening in those places has led to illegal acts and increased violence in support of those grievances against those structures and people utilizing them.

In the three months since the Oct. 7 massacre in Israel, U.S. antisemitic incidents have skyrocketed, reaching a total of 3,291\* incidents between Oct. 7, 2023, and Jan. 7, 2024, according to ADL's (the Anti-Defamation League) preliminary data. This represents a 361-percent increase compared to the same period one year prior, which saw 712 incidents. The preliminary three-month tally is higher than the total number of antisemitic incidents tracked in any year in the last decade, except for calendar year 2022, when the total number of incidents reached a historic high of 3,697. Since Oct. 7, there was an average of nearly 34 antisemitic incidents per day, putting 2023 on track to be the highest year for antisemitic acts against Jews since ADL started tracking this data in the late 1970s.

“The American Jewish community is facing a threat level that’s now unprecedented in modern history,” said Jonathan Greenblatt, ADL CEO. “It’s shocking that we’ve recorded more antisemitic acts in three months than we usually would in an entire year.”

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Given the rise of antisemitism and other forms of religious hate, we need to ensure that religious facilities remain accessible to their members and lawful visitors. As incidents of protest increase across the country, it is important that religious facility access remains a priority, and that people feel safe entering them. We have seen students at Hillels on college campuses and community members at their local synagogues feel intimidated and fearful of entering these facilities because protestors have blocked the entrances. This behavior is unacceptable, and access should be safeguarded by the state.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.adl.org/resources/press-release/us-antisemitic-incidents-skyrocketed-360-aftermath-attack-israel-according>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.splcenter.org/resources/reports/harassment/>

As reported by the Southern Poverty Law Center: 2

Since the Supreme Court overturned *Roe*, anti-abortion activists have redoubled their efforts to intimidate clinic workers and people seeking abortions. NAF statistics show that incidents of arson, invasions, death threats, burglaries and stalking all increased between 2021 and 2022. But the increases in violence and harassment against clinics, providers and patients in states protective of abortion were most dramatic, in some cases spiking exponentially. Stalking, for example, increased 229% overall from the previous year, but by 913% in states that maintain access to abortion care. Clinic obstructions increased by 538% in protective states compared to a 14% overall decrease.

This bill would deal with these issues by increasing the penalties on persons committing these criminal actions. It would prohibit a person from committing a crime of violence while the person is in a medical facility or a place of worship. A significant penalty will apply through providing that a person who violates the Act is guilty of a felony and on conviction is subject to imprisonment of up to 10 years.

**I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB1146.**