



ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Standing Up
and Speaking Out



Dear Friends:

As the world emerged from the depths of the Coronavirus pandemic and a sense of normalcy returned to our everyday lives over the past year, the Greater Washington Jewish community faced many challenges.

Sadly, our work was dominated by a torrent of antisemitism that touched public spaces, houses of worship, residential neighborhoods and most troublingly, far too many schools throughout the region.

We met those incidents head on, engaging with elected officials, faith leaders, law enforcement, school administrators, parents, teachers, students, and the general public to show that our Jewish community will not back down or be intimidated by vile hatred. The Montgomery County Board of Education recognized our work by presenting JCRC with its Distinguished Service to Public Education Award.

By hiring an assistant director in our education department, the JCRC greatly expanded our Student to Student initiative that trains teens to talk with their peers about their Jewish beliefs and traditions, while sharing their experiences with antisemitism. We also grew our Maggid program, which trains children of Holocaust survivors, or 2G's, to share their families' Holocaust narratives.

Further, the JCRC:

Continued to expand our interfaith and intergroup partnerships, while deepening existing relationships. Most notably, our alliance with members of the Asian American Pacific Islander community saw us coordinate a program with a traveling delegation of the AAPI and Jewish communities from the San Francisco Bay Area to better understand each other's heritage, shared values and common interests.

Scored numerous legislative victories, highlighted by the adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism in Virginia and in Montgomery County. We secured critical program funding for Jewish agencies throughout the region, while also obtaining much-needed dollars to bolster security at synagogues and other faith-based institutions.

Coordinated our community's annual Holocaust commemoration virtually to pay tribute to survivors and liberators and remember the legacies of the six million who were murdered.

Engaged our community with a series of virtual briefings and in-person discussions on a range of hot-button topics, including racial disparities in criminal justice, reproductive health and medical debt. We invited the superintendents of the two largest school systems in our region to town hall forums that enabled hundreds of parents, students and educators to share their concerns directly with school leadership.

Hired for the first time a communications director to better amplify our message and elevate our presence in the community.

Championed Israel and supported her citizens through ongoing terror attacks and the controversy surrounding judicial reform proposals that roiled the nation. (Note: This annual report, while produced after the October 7, 2023 massacre covers the yearlong period ending on June 30, 2023.).

The dynamic achievements highlighted in this annual report exemplify JCRC's influence and respected leadership in the Washington, D.C. region.

We are deeply grateful to all who have supported us in the past year and look forward to building on our successes for years to come.

B'Shalom,



Ron Halber



Thorn Pozen



Legislative Advocacy and Government Affairs

The nation has seen an incremental year-over-year rise of antisemitic incidents. From 2013-2023, the number increased almost 500%, headlining JCRC's advocacy efforts in this area. Beyond this priority, we notched a number of critical legislative accomplishments and secured essential funding for Jewish agencies, social service organizations, synagogues and other institutions across the DMV.

Our strong relationships with elected officials across the political spectrum at the federal, state and local levels, as well as a diverse group of community advocates who promote our priorities, are key to those successes.



In 2023, we advocated for bills in both Maryland and Virginia adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism.

In Maryland, the Montgomery County Council unanimously passed this resolution. In Virginia, not only is this definition being used to better track incidents, but we are providing training to the University System, and to the State Police in partnership with the Virginia Holocaust Museum.

We were thrilled to hold in-person legislative breakfasts for the first time since 2019. These opportunities for our constituents to hear from elected officials attracted almost 500 attendees and included an A-list lineup of speakers, including:

- U.S. Sen. Ben Cardin
- U.S. Sen. Chris Van Hollen
- U.S. Rep. Jamie Raskin
- U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly
- U.S. Rep. Don Beyer
- Governor Wes Moore
- Prince George's County Executive Angela Alsobrooks
- Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich
- Former Virginia House of Delegates Speaker Eileen Filler-Corn
- Loudoun County Board of Supervisors Chair Phyllis Raymond
- And many other state and local lawmakers.

“The JCRC is a potent political force in the Maryland State House and the Washington, D.C., region. The JCRC doesn’t just advocate for Jewish interests, but also for an array of social service programs, criminal justice reforms and other good works.”

– Maryland Matters



Making Headway in 2023



D.C.

Advocated for:

- ✓ Protection of low-income residents as it relates to getting or renewing a driver's license
- ✓ Awareness of Uyghur genocide alongside Adas Israel Congregation
- ✓ Supporting StandWithUs as they filed a civil rights complaint against George Washington University's Graduate Psychology program



Maryland

Establishment of:

- ✓ Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention
- ✓ Holocaust Remembrance Day in Maryland annually on January 27th.



Virginia

Funding for:

- ✓ School field trips to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum
- ✓ Security to protect faith-based institutions from hate crimes

We saw many new public servants take office this year, particularly in Maryland, where a new governor, attorney general and comptroller were all sworn into office – all of whom had to be brought up to speed on our priorities.

Our advocacy goes beyond just engaging with elected officials and governmental bodies. We hosted in-person and virtual programs to bring people together on hot-button issues such as our town halls with the superintendents of several area school systems or our ongoing

co-sponsorship of the Lawyer's Brown Bag Lunch Speaker Series exploring important subjects like Supreme Court decisions of the past term; the intersection of domestic abuse and gun violence; reproductive rights; Israel's proposed judicial reform and more.

FUNDING SECURED

\$5 million

for security for houses of worship

\$3 million

for security for nonpublic schools and childcare centers

\$250,000

for Makom's MOST program

\$1.5 million

for Combating Hate Crime Grant Program in Virginia. Funds allocated to Pozez JCC, Olam Tikvah, Geshar Jewish Day School, Temple Rodef Shalom and Agudas Achim Congregation.

\$1 million

in funding for social services including JSSA's Holocaust Survivor & Aging in Place programs, ElderSAFE, and the Maryland Israel Development Center.



Education + Combating Antisemitism

As antisemitism rises and accounts of the Holocaust are passed from generation to generation, it is more important than ever to engage young people of all faiths and backgrounds in the conversation.



10,000 students, teachers and community members who learned from the children of Holocaust survivors through our new program, Maggid: Generations of the Shoah



94 teens trained as Student to Student leaders



750 parents, students, teachers and community members attended 4 school system town halls in 6 weeks.



62 student presentations delivered at **25** different schools



6 teacher trainings



3 sets of social studies curriculum revisions in D.C., Maryland, and Virginia

Israel Action Center

The rise of antisemitism also precipitates the rise of anti-Israel sentiment. As a result, the Dr. Stuart Lessans Israel Action Center is more important than ever. We are committed to coordinating events and recruiting speakers to address and discuss on-the-ground issues, as well as diaspora-related topics.

In 2023, we launched a partnership with Project Shema to train and empower lay leaders and community members to have productive conversations on antisemitism and the Israeli-Palestinian issue in progressive spaces. Four cohorts were formed and three trainings took place. The Edlavitch DCJCC also hosted an open event in our Nation's capital to involve the greater community in the conversation.



Community Building

2023 marked a full return of in-person events, which further fostered relationship building, education, and learning.

One of the unexpected outcomes of the rise in antisemitism was an increase in requests for conversations about antisemitism and Jewish identity in DEI spaces. In 2023, we led or participated in nine panels and programs for a range of nonprofits, businesses, government, and school officials including:

- American College of Cardiology
- American University
- Center for Deployment Psychology
- Clyde Group
- Holton Arms School
- Prince George's County Office of Human Rights
- Sage Communications

We hosted:

- ✓ Four exclusive meetings with the Embassy of Israel
- ✓ A three-part webinar series to examine Israel's new government
- ✓ Two delegations of Israelis
- ✓ Four Zoom briefings with various Middle East experts

Speakers and guests included:

Doron Almog (*The Jewish Agency*)

Helit Barel (Devorah Forum)

Anna Borshchevskaya, David Makovsky + Ambassador Dennis Ross (Washington Institute)

Dr. Tamar Hostovsky Brandes (Ono Academic College)

Shuli Davidovich (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Dr. Shira Efron (Israel Policy Forum)

Lahav Harkov (The Jerusalem Post)

Orna Mizrahi (Institute for National Strategic Studies)

Dr. Meital Pinto (Israel Institute)

Dr. Jonathan Schanzer (Foundation for the Defense of Democracies)

Sam Sokol (Times of Israel)

Amir Tibon (Ha'aretz)

We also convened for the first time leaders from the Asian-American Pacific Islander community with Jewish leaders. Maryland Secretary of State Susan Lee headlined the event, which attracted more than 100 attendees.

Intergroup relations between local Black and Jewish communities were strengthened through projects such as supporting the Scotland AME Zion Church Juneteenth Heritage Festival and the Montgomery County Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Program.

We continued to support the Afghan refugee community to ensure that they have a place to call home in the DMV region. A webinar was co-hosted with the New Neighbors Interfaith Alliance (NNIA) to provide information to volunteers supporting Afghan families. A local partner congregation began a monthly Women's Circle to provide social time (including transportation + babysitting) and information to Afghan women on medical care, schools, U.S. currency, legal support, and more.



This year's Yom HaShoah Commemoration was more impactful than ever.

Approximately 12 survivors, 2Gs, 3Gs and their families joined members of the County Council and their staff for the presentation of the Montgomery County Yom HaShoah Proclamation.

Lou Pohoryles, a survivor who accepted the proclamation, shared his moving personal narrative.



Photo courtesy of Montgomery County Council

70

Elected officials that participated from across the DMV

25

Students from three Jewish day schools reading victims' names

24

Duration of livestream (in hours)

30,000

People reached on Facebook.



“We have to remember that the pluralistic society, the open society that we all cherish here in Montgomery County, that we all cherish in the United States, is at risk and so this gathering, this day, is as much a remembrance of the six million who died, but a fight and a struggle for the community we want and the community we need.”

– Montgomery County Council President Evan Glass

In conjunction with the Yom HaShoah Commemoration, we supported the following virtual programs:

- Yom HaShoah Yellow Candle - Donations support JSSA's Holocaust Survivor Program.
- Holocaust Remembrance Day Service - Co-sponsored by 3GDC and Sixth & I
- Once We Were Home - Book discussion with author Jennifer Rosner
- Zikaron BaSalon - Literally meaning "remembrance in the living room," an intimate way to commemorate this day at home among family, friends, and guests.
- Dor L'Dor - Opportunities for students to hear from and speak with Holocaust survivors and their descendants

JCRC in the NEWS



Our staff has been quoted in and had op-eds published by local, national and international news organizations, including:

The Washington Post
The Baltimore Sun
Richmond Times-Dispatch
Maryland Matters
Jewish Insider
The Jerusalem Post
The Times of Israel



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The JCRC is able to fulfill its mission thanks to the generous annual support of The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington and our many community donors.

“We are worth what we are willing to share with others.”

– Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

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