

2023 Baltimore Jewish Council End of Session Report

The 444th session of the Maryland General Assembly concluded on April 10, 2023. This year, the Presiding Officers agreed to implement a fully hybrid hearing format for bill hearings. Though the process of incorporating witnesses by Zoom started off a bit rocky, it became second nature by the end of the 90 days. The Baltimore Jewish Council's legislative team had "boots on the ground" in Annapolis and played an active, in-person role in advocating for Maryland's Jewish Community throughout the session. Below is a summary of key legislative and budget priorities that staff lobbied for on behalf of The Associated and its agencies.

CAPITAL BUDGET

With the COVID budget surplus mostly used, increased costs to state projects, and a decrease in state revenue, funding for capital improvements became increasingly limited for nonprofits. The Moore-Miller Administration also created a new system for vetting projects halfway through the session. Through hard work and good relationships with elected officials, our Government Relations team was able to secure funding for the following two capital improvement projects.

Pearlstone Center Renovation and Expansion

\$500,000 FY24

Pearlstone is fertile ground for connection and community, engaging people of all backgrounds and inspiring participants' body, mind, heart, and soul. Utilizing 180 acres of rolling hills, farmland, and forest in northern Baltimore County, the Pearlstone Campus impacts over 20,000 annual participants from across the state of Maryland and beyond through immersive retreats, organic farming, outdoor education, and community sustainability initiatives. However, Pearlstone's popularity has outgrown its space. The Pearlstone Campus Master Plan will double its impact to engage over 40,000 annual participants through retreats, team-building, summer camp, u-pick organic fruit, outdoor education, lifecycle celebrations, community concerts, and more. The full plan will cost approximately \$26 million, with almost \$14 million already raised, including \$3 million from the State from FY21-FY23 capital budgets. **An additional \$500,000 was allocated in this year's capital budget.**

Renovations and Expansion of The Associated's Park Heights Campus

\$500,000 FY24

The Park Heights campus of The Associated has served for generations as a hub for Baltimore's Jewish community and Northwest Baltimore. Located at the intersection of Park Heights Avenue and Northern Parkway, the campus offers everything from critical services to vulnerable residents and families, to meeting spaces for government agencies and community organizations, to the fitness and family options of the Jewish Community Center. The Associated intends to significantly expand its presence and investment in the Park Heights campus, as part of a broader plan to move The Associated's central headquarters from its current location on Mt. Royal Avenue up to the Park Heights campus. The expansion and renovation of The Associated's Park Heights campus is expected to cost approximately \$15-18 million. The state included \$1 million in FY23's capital budget. **An additional \$500,000 was allocated in this year's capital budget.**

OPERATING BUDGET

CHANA/AgeWell

\$300,000 FY24 (New Funding)

AgeWell Baltimore provides resources, guidance and support to older adults age with confidence and dignity. AgeWell Baltimore is supported by The Associated and its network of agencies, CHAI, CHANA and Jewish Community Services.

CHANA Elder Abuse Program

\$75,000 FY24 (Level Funded)

Data from the 2010 National Elder Mistreatment Study indicates that 1 in 10 respondents over the age of 60 reported abuse in 2009. Currently, over 18% of Marylanders are over the age of 60 and the percentage is steadily increasing. This means that over 111,000 elderly Marylanders could be experiencing abuse by a family member or caretaker every year. This program within CHANA supports the much-needed response to elder abuse. CHANA has established itself as an effective, collaborative, and coordinated response for victims and their families.

Community Network: Empowering Older Adults to Thrive in Supportive Communities

\$225,000 FY24 (Level Funded)

The Senior Friendly Neighborhoods (SFN) program began over a decade ago as a pilot project with significant, but temporary, financial support from the U.S. Department of Aging. The Associated, the Maryland Department of Aging, and local foundations now fund the program, which has undergone structural changes in recent years to fulfill the needs of a growing aging community. The old model struggled with recouping expenses, as program income was limited geographically and necessitated this more sustainable model. With support from The Associated and the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, in 2012 Comprehensive Housing Assistance Inc. (CHAI) (a SFN partner agency) launched the Supportive Community “Village” model, to help seniors age in place. Strong membership-based “buy-in” in the village contributes to making this model sustainable using thousands of hours of volunteer time, as well as membership-based dues structures and member-led fundraising efforts.

Aging-in-Place for Holocaust Survivors

\$350,000 FY24 (Level Funded)

A recent estimate indicates that approximately 600 Holocaust survivors live in the greater Baltimore metropolitan area. Jewish Community Services currently provides multiple services and supports to more than 350 Holocaust survivors and their families. The primary goal of the Baltimore Holocaust Survivors Program is to enable these elders to age in place with a sense of safety, security, comfort and community – elements of which they were deprived earlier in their lives. The numbers of Holocaust survivors requiring personal care assistance from Jewish Community Services (JCS) has been increasing, from an average of 88 clients per month in FY 2016 to over 180 per month in FY 2022. Given the projection that needs will continue to increase, as will the cost of in-home care, funding from the State in FY24 was critical.

Maryland Israel Development Center (MIDC)

\$300,000 FY24 (Level Funded)

The Maryland-Israel Development Center (MIDC) is a non-profit economic development organization that promotes job creation by facilitating bilateral trade, investment, and R&D cooperation between

Maryland and Israel. MIDC was established in 1992 as a partnership of The Associated, Maryland's Department of Commerce, and Israel's Ministry of Industry Trade (IMIT). Currently, 40 Israeli companies have created their American headquarters in Maryland thanks to MIDC's outreach efforts to Israeli cyber security and pharmaceutical companies. The Maryland/Israel binational accelerator will help Israeli businesses continue to find opportunities, partners and customers in the state.

OTHER FY24 BUDGET PRIORITIES

\$9 million secured for the BOOST scholarship program for low-income families, after much debate and negotiation.

\$5 million appropriated for the Protecting Religious Institutions Grant Program. *In addition to securing this funding, legislation was passed to codify this grant program into law. Read on to learn more about this initiative.*

\$3 million allocated for the Schools and Childcare Centers at Risk of Hate Crimes Grant Program.

\$2.5 million for nonpublic school safety improvements and healthcare needs.

POLICY PRIORITIES

SB842/HB1244- Maryland Holocaust Remembrance Day (*Senator Ben Kramer and Delegate Dalya Attar*)

This bill requires the Governor to annually proclaim Maryland Holocaust Remembrance Day to coincide with International Holocaust Remembrance Day (January 27th).

[Final Status: This bill passed and was signed into law by Governor Moore on April 11, 2023.](#)

SB797/HB1191- Task Force on Preventing and Countering Elder Abuse (*Senator Shelly Hettleman and Delegate Cheryl Pasteur*)

This bill establishes a two-year task force to study elder abuse laws in our state; see where there are gaps; and make recommendations to the General Assembly to create or modify existing laws to better protect Maryland's older adults.

[Final Status: This bill passed and was signed into law by Governor Moore on May 16, 2023.](#)

HB1066- Hate Crimes- Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention Establishment (*Delegate Joe Vogel*)

This bill codifies the Attorney General's Hate Crimes Task Force, making it a formal, permanent Commission with dedicated staff. Members of the commission would include the Baltimore Jewish Council, the ADL, the JCRC of Greater Washington, NAMI, Maryland State Police, the NAACP, the Immigration Outreach Service Center, and other key stakeholders that have already been established as members of the Task Force. The purpose of the commission is to develop strategies to prevent and respond to hate crime activities and evaluate state laws and polices relating to hate. Annual findings would be reported to the General Assembly and the Governor's Office.

[Final Status: This bill passed and was signed into law by Governor Moore on May 16, 2023.](#)

SB841/HB1242 – Local School Systems- Student Field Trips – Funding (*Senator Ben Kramer and Delegate Dalya Attar*)

This bill, as amended, provides \$500,000 in funding for schools to take field trips to museums that provide historic and sociological learning opportunities on the history and culture of an oppressed and historically underrepresented community. These museums include, but are not limited to, the Jewish Museum of Maryland, the Reginald F. Lewis Museum, The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, or the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

[Final Status: This bill passed, as amended, and was signed into law by Governor Moore on May 16, 2023.](#)

SB324/HB486- Task Force to Study Nonpublic Student Bus Transportation (*Senator Jim Rosapepe and Delegate Dalya Attar*)

This bill, as amended, establishes a Task Force to Study Nonpublic Student Bus Transportation to collect information from each local board of education on nonpublic school busing programs other than for the transportation of students in special education.

[Final Status: This bill passed, as amended, and was signed into law by Governor Moore on May 16, 2023.](#)

SB5/HB13- Hate Crimes – Civil Remedy (*Senator Ben Kramer and Delegate Charlotte Crutchfield*)

This bill allows a hate crime victim to bring a civil action against the person or persons who committed the crime.

[Final Status: This bill passed and was signed into law by Governor Moore on May 16, 2023.](#)

SB840/HB1243- Public Safety- Protecting Against Hate Crimes Grant Fund – Establishment (*Senator Ben Kramer and Delegate Dalya Attar*)

This bill codifies budget language that grants nonprofit organizations, including faith-based organizations, that are deemed “at-risk of hate crimes” funding for security enhancements. This can include the hiring of personnel for protection. Additionally, the bill sets aside at least \$1 million each year specifically for faith-based institutions. By codifying this budget appropriation, it will not be at risk of removal in the future.

[Final Status: This bill passed and was signed into law by Governor Moore on May 16, 2023.](#)

SB785/HB1075- Maryland Department of Emergency Management – Office of Domestic Terrorism Response (*Senator Shelly Hettleman and Delegate Sandy Rosenberg*)

To help address this unending threat, Maryland’s Task Force on Preventing and Countering Domestic Terrorism was first convened in Fall 2021, with a goal of determining how to effectively oppose domestic terrorism in Maryland, including, but not limited to, countering online extremism while protecting First Amendment rights. As a direct result of one of the three recommendations made by the Task Force, this bill would have established the Office of Domestic Terrorism Response within the Maryland Department of Emergency Management for the purpose of implementing measures to prepare for, prevent, and recover from domestic terrorism and hate crimes; and generally relating to emergency management and the Office of Domestic Terrorism Response.

[Final Status: This bill made it out of the House but did not receive a vote in the Judicial Proceedings Committee.](#)

HB638- Education – Holocaust Education Assistance Grant Program – Established (*Del. Mark Edelson*)

This bill would have established a \$1.2 million Holocaust Education Assistance Grant Program as an annual appropriation in the budget under the Maryland State Department of Education. These grants would be available to all 24 jurisdictions to assist with Holocaust education in public schools. It authorizes a local school system to apply to the Department for a grant of no more than \$50,000 to be used only for certain Holocaust-related training, materials, and activities.

[Final Status: This bill did not receive a vote in Committee.](#)

SB837/HB1241- Educate to Stop the Hate Act (*Senator Ben Kramer and Delegate Dalya Attar*)

This bill would have required the Department of Education to develop guidelines for instructional content on the Holocaust that is age-appropriate for elementary, middle, and high school curricula. This would include revising current Social Studies frameworks for 4th and 5th grade to include Holocaust education; altering the current middle school curricula for 6th and 7th grades to include the study of antisemitic roots that led to the Holocaust; and incorporating Holocaust education into both US and World History courses in high school.

[Final Status: This bill did not receive a vote by Committee.](#)

OTHER BILLS WE SUPPORTED

A few weeks into the legislative session, we were informed that the 2024 Presidential Primary was slated to fall on the first day of Passover. With assistance from Mayor Brandon Scott and County Executive Johnny Olszewski, who wrote letters to the Presiding Officers expressing support for changing the date, Delegate Sandy Rosenberg amended his Election Reform legislation to include moving the 2024 Primary Election in Maryland to May 14th. Special thanks to Senator Shelly Hettleman and Delegate Dalya Attar for their support in this effort.

[Final Status: This bill passed and was signed into law by Governor Moore April 24, 2023.](#)

SB665/HB774- The Senator Delores Kelley Residents of Unlicensed Programs Protection Act (*Senate President Ferguson and House Speaker Jones*)

This bill gives the power to the Office of Health Care Quality to investigate whether residents in an unlicensed assisted living program have been subject to neglect, exploitation, or abuse and gives the Attorney General the ability to pursue injunctive relief.

[Final Status: This bill passed and was signed into law by Governor Wes Moore on April 11, 2023.](#)

SB129/HB4- Criminal Law- Sexual Crimes- Repeal of Spousal Defense (*Senator Ariana Kelly and Delegate Charlotte Crutchfield*)

This bill repeals the prohibition on prosecuting a person for certain sexual offenses against a victim who was the person's legal spouse at the time of the alleged rape or sexual offense.

[Final Status: This bill passed and was signed into law by Governor Moore on May 16, 2023.](#)

SB613/HB908- Electricity- Community Solar Energy Generating Systems Program and Property Taxes (*Senator Ben Brooks and Delegate Luke Clippinger*)

With the Community Solar Energy Generating Systems Pilot Program set to expire in 2024, this bill establishes a permanent Community Solar Program that requires the systems to serve at least 40% of its kilowatt-hour output to low-income and moderate-income subscribers.

[Final Status: This bill passed and was signed into law by Governor Moore on May 16, 2023.](#)