

Dear Superintendent Taylor and Members of the Board of Education,

With a new school year upon us, we write to you as concerned clergy of dozens of synagogues across Montgomery County. In a community whose population is over 10% Jewish, our congregations collectively serve as spiritual and educational homes for thousands of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) students and employees who turn to us for guidance, learning, and support.

Over the last three years, we have been on the front lines of the current crisis of skyrocketing school-based antisemitism. We meet regularly with students who are hurt and confused and parents who are angry that their children are experiencing harassment, isolation, and threats to their fundamental physical and emotional safety. Dr. Taylor heard some of these heart-wrenching testimonials when he participated at the JCRC Town Hall at Temple Beth Ami earlier this year.

We are alarmed that the lack of a meaningful response by MCPS has led to an increase in the normalization of antisemitic attitudes, language and behaviors in our schools. This increase has been extensively documented and undermines MCPS' core values and obligations to its students and employees.

According to ADL statistics, Maryland ranked #5 in the country for the most antisemitic incidents in K-12 schools, and Montgomery County accounted for 84% of those incidents. MCPS's own recently released data underscores the seriousness of the broader hate-bias problem in our schools: the district documented 600 hate-bias incidents during the 2025–2026 school year, compared with 253 the previous year. MCPS has set a goal of reducing that number to 200 in 2026–2027.

We see and hear the human toll of those numbers in our offices and in our synagogue pews, including families who are opting to withdraw their children from MCPS in favor of Jewish or private, independent schools because their children don't feel safe. We speak to teenagers who stop attending school or are forced to transfer schools because they are being harassed and physically threatened and to teachers who experience daily bigoted comments from co-workers and students alike.

We need you and your school principals to be proactive and take concrete, meaningful steps to significantly reduce the number of incidents. Specifically, we urge you to take the following three steps in the 2026-27 academic year.

1. **Implement substantive teacher training specific to antisemitism.**

Administrators and teachers must be given the proper training and resources to correctly identify and respond to antisemitism. During the

2025-2026 academic year the JCRC trained over 1,000 educators across our region to better understand Jewish identity and antisemitism, at no charge to school districts. Only 2% of those educators were from MCPS.

2. **Use experiential learning programs to teach Jewish identity, antisemitism and the Holocaust.** During the past year, JCRC responded to double the number of incidents from MCPS as from Fairfax schools, yet only 15% of our Student to Student presentations were in MCPS schools. These presentations, along with our Holocaust Speakers' Bureau initiatives, directly tie in to state-mandated curricular frameworks, combatting stereotypes, conspiracy theories, and cultural ignorance. These programs are available to MCPS free of charge and are essential tools for nurturing school cultures where antisemitism cannot take root and where Jewish students feel known, valued, and safe.
3. **Establish and consistently enforce clear guidelines and consequences for social media behaviors that negatively impact students at schools.** District policies must be enforceable and be consistently implemented -- administrators must have the authority to respond when students are targeted with hate on social media, regardless of whether it occurs on official MCPS platforms and accounts,

We recognize that as leaders of one of the largest and most diverse school districts in the country, you navigate complex pressures and competing demands. However, complexity cannot be a reason for perennial delay. Antisemitism is one of the world's oldest hatreds, but we are not powerless in the face of this virulent scourge. We need only the will to do what is right – for our children, our schools, and our County. MCPS has already identified reducing hate-bias incidents as a district priority. We are asking you to match that commitment with these three concrete actions and provide measurable and transparent progress reports.

As we enter a new year for our schools and on our Jewish calendar, we reiterate our commitment to work with you and the JCRC to achieve meaningful progress for the sake of all our students.

With respect, urgency, and hope for a better year ahead,

Rabbi Rachel Ackerman, Temple
Shalom, Chevy Chase

Rabbi Aaron Alexander, Adas Israel,
Washington

Rabbi Charles Arian, Kehilat Shalom,
Montgomery Village

Cantor Benjamin Bazian, Congregation
Har Tzeon-Agudath Achim, Silver
Spring

Rabbi Mitchell Berkowitz, B'nai Israel
Congregation, Rockville

Rabbi Mendel Bluming, Chabad of
Potomac

Cantor Arianne Brown, Adas Israel,
Washington

Rabbi Aderet Drucker, The Den
Collective, Maryland, Washington, &
Virginia

Rabbi Eliana Fischel, Washington
Hebrew Congregation, Potomac &
Washington

Cantor Asa Fradkin, Congregation
Beth El, Bethesda

Rabbi Marc Israel, Tikvat Israel
Rockville

Rabbi Josh Gischner, Temple Shalom,
Chevy Chase

Rabbi Batya Glazer, Ohr Kodesh
Congregation, Chevy Chase

Rabbi Salomon Gruenwald,
Congregation Kol Shalom, Rockville

Rabbi Greg Harris, Congregation Beth
El, Bethesda

Rabbi Corey Helfand, Ohr Kodesh
Congregation, Chevy Chase

Rabbi David Helfand, Shaare Torah,
Gaithersburg

Cantor Rochelle Helzner, Tikvat Israel
Congregation, Rockville

Rabbi Lauren Holtzblatt, Adas Israel,
Washington

Rabbi Daria Jacobs-Velde, Oseh
Shalom, Takoma Park

Rabbi Josh Jacobs-Velde, Oseh Shalom,
Takoma Park

Rabbi Alison Kobey, Congregation Or
Chadash, Damascus

Cantor Hinda Eisen Labovitz, Tikvat
Israel Congregation, Rockville

Rabbi Jonah Layman, Shaare Tefila
Congregation, Olney

Rabbi Aaron Miller, Washington Ohr
Kodesh Hebrew Congregation, Potomac
& Washington

Rabbi Jesse Nagelberg, B'nai Shalom of
Olney, Olney

Rabbi Tracy Nathan, Tifereth Israel
Congregation, Washington

Rabbi Scott Perlo, Adat Shalom
Reconstructionist Synagogue, Bethesda

Rabbi Gary Pokras, Temple Beth Ami,
Rockville

Rabbi Sholom Raichik, Chabad of
Upper Montgomery County,
Gaithersburg

Rabbi Adam Raskin, Congregation Har Shalom, Potomac

Rabbi Jon Roos, Temple Sinai, Washington

Rabbi Shira Rosenblum, Congregation Har Shalom, Potomac

Rabbi Adam Rosenwasser, Temple Emanuel, Kensington

Rabbi Michael Safra, B'nai Israel Congregation, Rockville

Rabbi Sue Shankman, Washington Hebrew Congregation, Potomac & Washington

Rabbi Abbi Sharofsky, JCRC of Greater Washington

Cantor Max Silverstone, Congregation Har Shalom, Potomac

Rabbi Bentzy Stolik, Chabad of Olney, Olney

Rabbi Cheryl Stone, B'nai Israel Congregation, Rockville

Rabbi Steven Suson, Congregation Har Tzeon-Agudath Achim, Silver Spring

Rabbi Brahm Weinberg, Kemp Mill Synagogue, Silver Spring

Rabbi Baht Yameem Weiss, Temple Beth Ami, Rockville

Rabbi Michael Werbow, Tifereth Israel Congregation, Washington

Washington synagogues represented here have many MCPS families in their congregations.