

Good morning. My name is Vicki Fishman. I am the Northern Virginia Director of Government and Community Relations for the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington, the public affairs arm of the organized Jewish community, representing over 100 synagogues, schools and institutions. Thank you for the time and expertise you have devoted to ensuring that Virginia's educational system incorporates the histories of all Virginians. Your work is crucial to raising the next generation, empowering them with tools and understanding to combat hatred, nurture mutual respect, and strengthen communities.

Recent trends point toward an increase in acts of hate necessitating this critical update in what we teach our children. The FBI and Anti-Defamation League report that the Jewish community, in particular, has been the target of a stunning percentage of and rise in hate incidents. The FBI has reported that 60% of religiously based hate crimes are targeted at the Jewish community. That is, 60% targeting a community that makes up less than 2% of the US population. The ADL additionally reported a 75% increase in antisemitic incidents this past

May, including 17,000 tweets in a single week using some variation of "Hitler was right." On the other hand, we have become all too familiar with attempts to draw false comparisons between today's struggles and the Holocaust. Among your other recommendations, we thank you for emphasizing education about the Holocaust and for recognizing that antisemitism did not begin nor end with it.

Our experience working in and with the public-school systems informs are input today. For many years we have been a resource for school administrators and teachers, as well as to Jewish families navigating school curricula, academic calendars and school cultures that too often have failed to fully recognize and include Jewish and other minority populations and histories.

It is because of our experience and our partnerships, that we worked closely with Senator Boysko and others for the legislation that authorized your work – and we recognize that it is one of many necessary steps in what still will



be a long process of implementation in localities and districts, schools and classrooms. We have been privileged to work with our local school boards, administrators and teachers in ensuring that our schools allow for Jewish students to thrive proudly and confidently. We now look forward to knowing that every Virginia education will ensure some understanding and familiarity of our community's history as well as the histories of so many other communities that have and continue to enrich our Commonwealth. To that end, I close not only with our appreciation, but with our offer of assistance. As we have offered training modules for students, teachers and administrators in our region, we stand ready to offer our help throughout the Commonwealth.