



# **Baltimore Community Antisemitism Task Force Action Plan**

**November 2020**

## **Introduction**

The Baltimore Jewish community is alarmed by the uptick in antisemitism, prejudice and hate that we are seeing in our community, in our nation, and around the world.

While our community has long been engaged in confronting and fighting antisemitism, The Associated and the Baltimore Jewish Council decided that the time was right for our community to come together and evaluate what has been working, what is falling short, and what new initiatives ought to be tried. A cross-section of our community's lay and professional leadership – both within and outside of The Associated system – has wrestled with these questions over the past year, and this report is the result of their work.

The work of the Baltimore Jewish Community Task Force on Antisemitism and its professional advisory group largely fell into four broad recommendation areas:

- Education
- Advocacy
- Relationship Building
- Monitoring and Responding

The recommendations in this report are ambitious, and we recognize that not all of them can be accomplished at once. Some will require investments of new resources and staff, whether through grant funding or other means. Synagogues and organizations from across our community will be asked to help – neither the Baltimore Jewish Council nor The Associated's agencies can accomplish this without partnership from all. But by prioritizing these recommendations and setting a schedule for implementation, we believe that we can move toward accomplishing our collective vision. The dynamics of the ongoing pandemic – and the antisemitism that it has created – add urgency to this report.

One crucial caveat must be raised about this work. From the start of the process, the issue of physical security and safety was explicitly kept separate and distinct. Law enforcement and security professionals have been focused on security and

safety for many years, and investments of millions of dollars are being made by organizations, synagogues, and other Jewish institutions. A review of security efforts and programs is included within this report to provide context for readers, but that work was intentionally kept outside of the focus of confronting antisemitism.

It is also important to remember that, while fighting antisemitism is crucial, our fight must support – not overtake – our efforts at encouraging meaningful and joyous Jewish life.

This report is a call to action. Expressions of hatred are on the rise, and this is especially true with expressions of antisemitism. We must recognize it, confront it, educate about it, and join together with like-minded people opposed to hatred and bigotry.

## **Background on Process**

In May 2019, The Associated and the Baltimore Jewish Council invited the top professional and lay leaders from every Jewish institution in the Baltimore region to come together at Chizuk Amuno Congregation for a summit on antisemitism. More than 75 rabbis, agency directors, board presidents, Jewish elected officials and others came together. The group received a briefing on antisemitism from an international, national and local perspective from Senator Ben Cardin; Doron Ezickson, Washington Regional Director of ADL; Marc B. Terrill, President of The Associated; and Howard Libit, Executive Director of the Baltimore Jewish Council. The group then split up into tabletop conversations with the charge of brainstorming what the community is currently doing successfully at combating antisemitism, what is unsuccessful, and what new ideas should be tried. A summary of each table's findings was reported back to the full group.

At the conclusion of the summit, it was announced that Debra S. Weinberg, chair of The Associated, and Rabbi Andrew Busch, first vice president of the Baltimore Jewish Council, had agreed to serve as co-chairs of a community antisemitism task force. Anyone who joined the summit was encouraged to volunteer. Ultimately, the decision was made to create a Baltimore Jewish Community Task Force on Antisemitism, comprised mostly of lay leaders, and a Professional Advisory Group of communal professional leaders. The two groups worked in parallel, sharing recommendations back and forth, under the facilitation of Michelle Gordon, The Associated's Chief of Staff; Ruth Miller, The Associated's Chief Planning Officer; and Howard Libit, the BJC's Executive Director.

Both the Task Force and the professional advisory group met during the fall and winter – reviewing the brainstorming results of the summit, learning about existing efforts of the Baltimore community as well as initiatives of other communities from around the country, developing a Jewish community definition and statement on antisemitism (attached), and identifying ideas that formed the basis for this report.

This report and the Baltimore Jewish Community Statement on Antisemitism aim to be consensus documents. It does not necessarily reflect the unanimous agreement of everyone on the Task Force or the professional advisory group. But collectively, the members – representing a broad cross-section of the Baltimore Jewish community – believe that these ideas can help confront and battle the recent growth of antisemitism.

## **Confronting Antisemitism Through Education**

To battle antisemitism, we must better educate both our Jewish community, and our broader community across the Baltimore region. This involves teaching what antisemitism is, the root causes of antisemitic actions and beliefs, and how antisemitism fits into the broader context of hate in our society. Training about antisemitism ought to be part of training against racism. We cannot be an effective ally to other communities, nor can we expect other communities to be effective allies to us, if we do not understand the types of hate, discrimination and threats experienced by each of our communities.

### **1. *Trainings and Briefings***

*If we want to be successful in combating antisemitism and hate, we must focus our trainings and direct outreach briefings on key groups, including the educators who are teaching our future generations, the law enforcement professionals who are tasked to protecting us and enforcing the laws, parents who prepare their children to enter the world, and elected officials and community leaders who serve as role models for our society.*

#### **Educators**

- Diversity officers and similar specialists (K-12 and higher education) – Work to ensure that offices of diversity and lead diversity officers recognize and respect antisemitism as an issue deserving of their attention and should be part of their mission.
- Front-line classroom instructors (K-12 and higher education) – Work with school systems and colleges to understand and enhance how they prepare teachers to instruction and respond to incidents of antisemitism and hate. Example: Training with ADL or similar organizations.
- College campuses without a Hillel presence – Ensure that college administrations and communities of Jewish students/faculty know where to turn for assistance in response to incidents of antisemitism.
- Athletic coaches – Develop a program focused on teaching athletic coaches to eliminate antisemitism and fight racial discrimination. Example: Ross Initiative in Sports for Equality. <https://risetowin.org/>

#### **Law Enforcement and Public Safety Personnel**

- Awareness of antisemitism in responding to crimes – Help police and prosecutors to be properly educated and trained about hate crimes, ensuring proper recording of statistics and appropriate pursuit of justice.
- Understanding of Jewish faith and traditions to ensure they are respectful – Educate public safety personnel about Jewish holidays traditions, customs and laws, avoiding conflicts and creating an environment of mutual respect.

## Parents

- Ways for parents to help children through encounters with antisemitism, either in school or in community, while ensuring that children do not become overfull fearful.
- Ways for parents to help ensure older children are prepared for what they may encounter post-high school in the areas of antisemitism and hate
- Online safety training provided to youth and families regarding hate on social media and the Internet.

## Jewish Communal Professionals

- Training on how to lead Jewish communities through incidents of antisemitism.
- Anti-racism training to ensure our community's professionals are prepared to be allies with other communities facing hate and threats.
- Training for non-Jewish staff working in Jewish communal organizations to understand the nuances, traditions and customs of colleagues and clientele to create an environment of mutual respect between staff and service recipients.

## Elected officials and community leaders

- Teaching the nuances around antisemitic language and tolerance, both through their actions and their words, and the impact that their messages have as leaders of the broader community.

## **2. *Personal Responses***

### Jewish community

- Create lessons for individuals in the community how to respond to incidents of antisemitism in their own lives, in the community, and online.

### Other communities

- Sharing knowledge with members of other communities about antisemitism and how antisemitism fits within the context of hate and racism being encountered by partner communities.

## **3. *Communication and Coordination***

### Development of ways to coordinate activities and programs in the community to fight antisemitism

- Central repository of antisemitism programming information – creation of a go-to place for individuals and groups to find information on available programs, trainings, support and advice.
- Communications strategies to ensure these programs are being shared widely, such as informational fliers to be posted throughout synagogues and community institutions (example: CHANA's fliers).

## Advocacy

Standing up for our community against antisemitism and hate requires advocacy to ensure that the laws of our state and nation keep up with new forms of harassment, threats and violence. This can range from lobbying in Annapolis or Washington for tougher hate crime laws to ensuring that fast-moving social media is properly regulated. The Jewish community must be willing to advocate for laws that fight antisemitism, but also laws that protect other communities against hate.

As part of our efforts to educate in Maryland's schools, we must remain active, vigilant and helpful in ensuring that children learn about the Holocaust, antisemitism, hate and genocide.

### **1. Legislative:**

*Our lawmakers at the local, state and federal levels have many tools at their disposal to help our collective fight against antisemitism and hate. We must join them in advocating for new laws, and enforcement of existing laws, to support our community and all communities that are facing threats of hate or violence. While Maryland is a leader in many areas, we must stay aware of innovative legislative initiatives from other states and adapt them for our community. Examples of legislative advocacy work include:*

- Enhanced penalties for hate crimes
- Close loopholes in laws
- Ensure hate crime laws stay current with new forms of harassment and hate
- Ensure police properly track and respond to incidents

### **2. Publicize and Support State Changes to Holocaust Education**

#### **Requirements:**

*With the Maryland State Superintendent and Maryland State Board of Education poised to adopt more rigorous and enhanced Holocaust education reports for the elementary, middle and high school levels, we must stand ready to provide support for teacher training and vigilant to ensure local school systems follow through on the new requirements. This education must be about the Holocaust, other events of genocide and hate, as students must learn about bigotry and racism encountered by different communities and societies.*

- Coordinate community's resources to enhance training of teachers for new state curriculum standards
- Ensure state school board follows through on state superintendent's commitments
- Monitor and hold accountable how local school systems adopt and implement these new standards



## **Relationship Building**

In the battle against bigotry, to have allies, one must be an ally. Combating bigotry, in all its forms, is a core Jewish value. As the Torah teaches commands us, “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18). The Jewish community cannot remain on the sidelines as others are attacked, and yet still expect others to come to its defense. Dialogue and coalition-building with other communities must be a priority. This requires us to develop relationships through meaningful activities that aim to create a better society.

### ***1. Stand up with Allies***

*The Jewish community must actively stand with partners who are threatened or under attack. We cannot expect to have allies if we do not actively participate as an ally to others.*

- Educating Jewish community about need to join with others, and what it means to be an ally.
- Proactively building relationships, not just about hate, but based on shared values and priorities.
- Identifying potential partnerships with other faith organizations and non-profits.
- Develop multi-level relationships among professionals, lay leaders, and community members.
- Advocating on issues collectively – not just to battle antisemitism and hate, but on such areas as health care, criminal justice reform and community investment.

### ***2. Interfaith community activities***

*Such activities offer a productive way to begin to forge relationships – not just among top-level leadership, but among community members who can build trust. Examples include:*

- 2 for Seder Initiative
- Community holiday celebrations
- Cooperative prayer opportunities (Example: cross-pulpit Martin Luther King Jr. weekend sermons)
- Communal dinners
- Community service

### ***3. Community Leadership***



*To effectively bring together the Jewish community in cooperation with partner communities, the Jewish community must assert itself as a leader in this area – not just on antisemitism, but in combating all forms of hate.*

- Statement on antisemitism and community roll-out
- Community Summit on Antisemitism and Hate
- Cohort of Community Leaders to Combat Hate
- Love Thy Neighbor communications campaign
- Ongoing antisemitism committee, under the auspices of the Baltimore Jewish Council, to oversee implementation of this action plan within the community

## **Monitoring and Responding**

To confront antisemitism, we must better understand the frequency and types of hate that members of our community are experiencing – ranging from incidents of language, to discrimination in schools or the workplace, to vandalism, threats and violence. For our community, we must develop a unified system to collect reports, as well as consistent standards of how we should respond, both individually and on behalf of our community.

### **1. Reporting and tracking:**

*A consistent concern of our community, our leadership and our law enforcement partners is the lack of consistent statistics and data on incidents of antisemitism and hate. We must establish a mechanism for people to report incidents, including anonymously, to ensure we have an accurate picture of what is occurring.*

Development of a system for institutions and community members to report incidents of antisemitism

- Online reporting – development of a website that can accept reports of antisemitism and classify them appropriately.
- Marketing the system across the community.
- Development of a protocol for monitoring the website and ensuring appropriate responses (including urging individuals who feel threatened or in danger to immediately call law enforcement authorities).
- Periodic reporting of statistics submitted to this registry, such as an annual community report.

### **2. Communal responses:**

*The lack of consistency in when to publicly respond to incidents of antisemitism, and how to respond, can be frustrating to many in the community. With the development of the community statement and definition of antisemitism, there should be some guidance. Guidelines should be developed to provide further direction to institutions about when and how to respond, through such potential options as statements, direct conversations/education or legal action.*

Development of guidelines for institutional responses

- Intervention to directly challenge antisemitic actions/statements and advocate on behalf of victims
- Public statements
- Legal action

### **3. Online resources for responses:**

*The question of how to respond to incidents of antisemitism is one that frequently faces individuals, families, and community institutions. This is particularly*

*challenging in the area of online and social media incidents of hate and antisemitism. The development of helpful guides for the Baltimore community, or the adaptation of existing resources from other communities or national organizations and making these guides available online would be extremely helpful for consistent and confident confrontation.*

Development of information to help guide community members, families and institutions on how to respond when they encounter antisemitism.

- Personal incidents
- Community incidents
- Online and social media

#### **4. Security:**

*Physical security of the community's Jewish institutions and community members was explicitly identified as being beyond the scope of the work of the Task Force. Law enforcement and security personnel have devoted thousands of hours, and institutions and synagogues have dedicated millions of dollars, to this critical area dating back to the Sept. 11 attacks in 2001. Extensive planning, training and preparations have already gone into security, and it was decided that the Task Force should focus on confronting antisemitism. Nevertheless, for context, a top-line review of existing security work seemed appropriate to include within this report.*

- Director of Security – The Baltimore Jewish Council employs a Director of Security for The Associated system, who is responsible for providing security planning advice, coordinating incident responses, and maintaining relationships with law enforcement partners, on behalf of Jewish institutions across the Baltimore community and much of the state.
- Assessments – The BJC's Director of Security, as well as local, state and federal law enforcement officials, regularly provide free security assessments for synagogues and other Jewish institutions to help with planning, investments of security dollars, and applications for grant funding.
- Grants
  - Federal – The federal government has operated a grant application program for security initiative for faith institutions since the Sept. 11 attacks. The Baltimore region's Jewish community has received nearly \$12 million in such grants over the past 15 years.
  - State – The state budget has created several grant programs for schools, daycare centers and places of worship deemed to be at risk for hate crimes in the past two years. In Fiscal Year 2020, that money totals \$8.5 million statewide.
- Personnel – Synagogues and institutions across the community are spending millions of dollars per year on armed and unarmed personnel to provide

protection every day for children at day schools, people worshipping in synagogues, and individuals visiting Jewish community buildings.

- Physical building security – Synagogues, schools and other institutions are constantly upgrading their facilities with:
  - Cameras
  - Doors
  - Fencing
  - Traffic barriers
  - Bullet-proof and explosion-resistant windows and film
  - Alarm systems
  - Redesigning entrances
  - Interior lockdown mechanisms
- Response systems for synagogues and institutions are in place:
  - Panic buttons
  - Internal alert communications
- Trainings on active shooters, suspicious packages and other potential threats are conducted regularly for:
  - Community Members
  - Institutions (schools, synagogues, etc.)
- Drills for students and employees in schools and institutions
- Coordination, communications and partnership with local, state and federal law enforcement
- Trauma Response Teams are available in an emergency
- Community communications are in place
  - Alert system through Secure Community Network (SCN), the official safety and security organization of the Jewish community in North America, founded under the auspices of The Jewish Federations of North America and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, for urgent warnings
  - Email communications to a list reaching all community institutions (both security alerts and information on security-related opportunities/programs/grants)

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