

AGUDATH ISRAEL
of MARYLAND
MID-ATLANTIC REGION

LEGISLATIVE REPORT 2025



SESSION RECAP:

With the 2025 Maryland General Assembly session in Annapolis now behind us, it is time once again to take stock of the results of this year's session and its impact on our community. This year's legislative session was undoubtedly centered around the financial strain of the State of Maryland. Going into session, the determination emanating from "the Second Floor" (of the statehouse, where the Governor and staff work) to achieve fiscal stability by cutting expenditures and increasing revenue (through taxation) meant that new programs with large budgets were unlikely to pass. Instead, work would have to be done to protect the programs and grants from which our community most benefits.

THE STATE BUDGET

BOOST Fortunately, the programs most directly benefitting our community did not sustain budget cuts. The BOOST scholarship program, which has faced its share of challenges, was quietly and without fanfare level-funded at **\$9 million** (of which nearly one-third benefits our school households), allowing this crucial program to continue into its tenth year.

Health and Security Similarly, the Health and Security Program, providing funding for school nursing and broader health and security costs, was level-funded as well, at **\$2.5 million**. An attempt to cut the program budget based on a claim that much of the allocated funds were not being spent was quickly stopped by our advocacy, and we pointed out that the assessment was based on a misunderstanding of the allocation timeline. Additionally, a significant step in protecting the Health and Security Program was achieved this year by lobbying to have the program language defined and delineated in the budget.

Protecting Against Hate Crimes Funding for the Protecting Against Hate Crimes (PAHC) grant was increased from \$5 million to **\$10 million**,



an important increase in light of the troubled times we are living in. However, changes to the program now mean that only synagogues and nonprofits, but not schools, can apply for this grant.

Hate Crimes Grant Instead, schools (only those who are deemed to be at risk of a hate crime) can apply for the Hate Crimes Grant (HCG) administered through the Maryland Center for School Safety, funded at **\$3 million**.

LEGISLATION OF INTEREST

Emergency Lights on Cars - A [bill](#) with a direct impact on our community was one allowing Hatzalah responders to display emergency lights in/on their cars when responding to a medical emergency. The bill was championed by Senator Dalya Attar and passed unanimously in both the House and the Senate and is an important step in helping our paramedics arrive to provide life-saving treatment that much faster.



Keeping Assisted Suicide Out of MD



For almost a decade, we have worked alongside faith groups, disability rights groups, and elder-care advocacy organizations to strongly oppose the legislative efforts to legalize physician assisted suicide (PAS). This bill was once again introduced and heard this session, but thankfully failed to move past the Senate.

Boycotting the Boycotters of Israel



Another [bill](#) targeting the policy initially implemented by then-Governor Larry Hogan and maintained by current Governor Wes Moore which prohibits state agencies from contracting with businesses that boycott Israel also failed. Likewise, a [bill](#) attempting to penalize organizations for “supporting Israeli settlement activity” did not gain any traction.

Enhancing Child Care Programs



Within recent years, programs surrounding child care have become one of the primary items from which our community benefits, and our office is extremely engaged on issues related to these programs. Mention should therefore be made of two bills within this category. One, a [bill](#) mandating the analysis of whether current regulations may be negatively affecting child care centers (to help reduce unnecessary regulatory challenges); and two, a [bill](#) relaxing the required ratio of staff certified in first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

Publishing Special Education Options

Of particular interest to our Yahalom community, a [bill](#) requiring county boards of education to publish a list of special service delivery models available for children with a disability enrolled in nonpublic schools was passed. This measure will help keep parents of children with special needs aware of educational service opportunities for their children.



Educating for Holocaust Awareness

A [bill](#) championed by Delegate Mark Edelson advancing Holocaust education in the public school system was passed. At a time when the Jewish community finds itself in the crosshairs of ignorant and uninformed conspirators who are quick to jump on the “today’s victim bandwagon”, we appreciate the fact that legislators recognize the ugly growth of Holocaust denial and are attempting to combat it.



All-Year Daylight Savings

As has occurred in previous years, there was an attempt made to push Maryland towards adopting Daylight Savings Time (DST) year-round, but the bill did not advance. (The unintended consequences of year-round DST would create [havoc](#) for the frum community.)



Ensuring Parity in Legislation A bill advanced this year to modify the Maryland Child Victims Act of 2023 was the subject of

our attention. Initially, the new legislation included standards that distinguished and granted advantages to State-connected entities while creating greater liability for independent organizations, including schools. While we did not take a position on the bill itself, we emphasized that a double standard was not right and that parity should be maintained between public and nonpublic entities. With the help of Delegate Jon Cardin, the final version of the bill reflected such parity and placed limits on the potential financial catastrophe of a nonpublic entity found liable for damages.

Are Free School Meals worth a tax hike?



Another [bill](#) of interest was an attempt to have the State fund school meals for all students, and expand the

child care voucher program, in exchange for a new tax to be placed on sugary beverages. While we support both school meals and child care vouchers, we do not advocate for new taxes, and thus we did not take a stance in support of the bill. As it was, the bill did not pass.

Additional legislative notes Some bills we supported did not make the cut as well, including a [bill](#) that would have increased 529 benefits; a [bill](#) which would have created a pilot program for additional funding for certain school meal programs; and a [bill](#) which would have made it a misdemeanor to attempt to stop someone from entering or exiting a house of worship. Finally, a [bill](#) attempting to restrict a nonpublic school's ability to collect outstanding tuition debts did not pass.

CONCLUDING WORDS

We express our sincere appreciation to the members of the Maryland General Assembly (and their dedicated staffs) with whom we closely work during the session – and before and after it. Their dedication to the households and community members in their districts is quite admirable and the friendship they display to us is ever appreciated.


For the majority of our legislative agenda, we work closely each year with a strong team of similar-minded advocates. We would like to thank them for partnering with us. Many tense hours are spent in the Annapolis trenches and without that shared trust and teamwork, our success and effectiveness would be far more limited.



Lastly, please regularly check out our website for an abundance of helpful info to the households and institutions of our community. Whether you're looking for details on the BOOST Program, Maryland's 529 Program, the Child Care Voucher Program, or the MTA 92 bus, or if your shul is seeking information on available security grants, you can find guidance and resources on all these programs (and more!) on our website, www.AgudahMD.org.

Best wishes and brocho v'hatzlocho!

Rabbi Ariel Sadwin



Avi Lencz

