



AGUDATH ISRAEL
of MARYLAND
MID-ATLANTIC REGION

LEGISLATIVE REPORT 2026



SESSION RECAP

The Maryland General Assembly concluded its annual 90-day legislative session on Sine Die, Monday, April 13 at midnight. Our brief Sine Die video was filmed and published early the next morning, and offered a quick recap of some of the most primary items. With the session fully behind us, it is time once again to take stock of the 90 days and the impact on our community, through a more comprehensive review of the 2026 legislative session.

STATE BUDGET



Our primary focus going in to session was on ensuring that the budget items benefitting our communities would be included in full in the state budget. In the lead-up to session, we were focused on tweaking parts of the budgetary language to ensure that all of our schools would be eligible to apply for available funds, rather than leave eligibility guidelines open for adversarial interpretation. Additional tweaks we submitted helped solidify other areas of nonpublic school policy to ensure that school compliance with student assessment policies would remain streamlined and acceptable.

For the first time, and as a result of our extensive efforts working alongside state budget officials, all of our allocations and their supporting language were included as intended, without the need for the usual political jockeying we annually expect in late March.

Continuing on a budgetary note, the last few weeks of session saw a troubling attempt to redirect a significant portion of our **Ed DeGrange Nonpublic Aging Schools Program**, which would have significantly reduced the ability of our community schools to benefit from the program. Fortunately, through quick, late-minute diplomacy by our team, we were able to ward off the proposed changes.



Here is the budget update, detailing the final tallies of the programs that benefit our schools and nonprofits:

The **Hate Crimes Grant** for nonpublic schools – a critical allocation in our troubled times – will see an increase of some \$500,000, for a total of \$3.5 million. The **BOOST Program**, which has faced challenges in the past, will continue to be funded at its typical \$9 million. Similarly, the **Nonpublic School Health and Security Program** (\$2.5 million) and **Protecting Against Hate Crimes (PAHC)** grant (\$10 million) were level-funded. The **Nonpublic School Textbook Program** will continue to be funded at \$6 million, and the Senator James E. “Ed” DeGrange Nonpublic Aging Schools Program (NASP) at \$3.5 million.



LEGISLATION OF INTEREST

Federal Scholarship Tax Credit

In the wake of the historic inclusion of the Federal Scholarship Tax Credit (FSTC) in President Trump’s One Big Beautiful Bill Act, there were conflicting bills seeking to impact Maryland’s potential participation in the program. The state’s GOP caucus brought a bill to require the Governor to opt Maryland into the program (as required by law). At the same time, some of the usual



legislative critics of nonpublic school funding attempted to pass a bill which would have forbidden any Maryland “opt in”. Disturbingly, that bill also included a component which would have stopped much of the Maryland 529 benefits which provides our community with much benefit. We did not support the idea of trying to legislate the “opt-in” in either direction, but put out a strong opposition to the latter measure, which thankfully did not pass. We will continue to provide updates on the progress and process of the FSTC program during the lead up to its start in 2027.

School Operations

Similarly, we opposed a number of proposals that would have significantly restricted the ability of our schools to operate as they normally have. Two proposed bills would have restricted a nonpublic school’s ability to collect outstanding tuition debts, while another would have imposed new, onerous legal protocols on schools. Yet another would have expanded schools’ liability, and one more would have allowed the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights to advance lawsuits against nonpublic schools with unlimited punitive damages, thus upending the existing nondiscrimination agreements. We opposed these measures, which did not pass.

Israel

As in the rest of the country, there have been attempts in Maryland to pass legislation targeting the State of Israel. A 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 (aka the BDS movement) failed, as did a bill attempting to force Maryland retirement accounts to divest from Israeli-related funds. The attempt to penalize organizations for “supporting Israeli settlement activity” likewise failed to pass. Additionally, a resolution to condemn the alleged human rights violations occurring in Gaza did not gain traction.

Birth Certificates

After being contacted by the Association of Independent Midwives of Maryland asking for our support, our office took a lead role in legislation to extend what had been a 5-day deadline for registering a birth certificate, which often causes a difficult challenge for those who do not formally name a newborn child in the immediate 24-48 hours after birth. The legislation changes this window from five to ten days, which will allow parents who wish to wait on registering their child’s name until after the birth and the like. The legislation passed, and was signed by the Governor in May.



Stopping Religious Intimidation

In light of incidents across the country where activists attempted to intimidate individuals attempting to enter synagogues and the like, we testified in support of a bill imposing rigorous consequences on anyone attempting to interfere with others from engaging in the exercise of religious beliefs and service in a place of worship. The bill passed and was signed by the Governor.

Child Care



The increased interest in the Child Care Scholarship (CCS) Program, colloquially known as “child care vouchers,” with eligible applicants exceeding available funding, has resulted in a “freeze,” in which new applicants are waitlisted for the program. The new budget included additional funds for the program, which will hopefully allow for more eligible applicants to move past the waitlist and begin to participate. Additionally, a measure governing applicant priority passed, which included the prioritization of children with siblings already enrolled in the program, something that resonates strongly in our community.

Cuts affecting Yahalom families



Part of the budget negotiations included a proposal to change certain components of the Self-Directed Services program within the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DDA). These cuts directly affect services our families rely on every day. In coordination with other special needs advocates, we pushed for any cuts to be distributed equitably across DDA programs rather than targeting specific, crucial programs. Many Yahalom parents attended one or both of the two rallies (one in March, one in August) held in Annapolis to protest the proposed cuts. While the proposal did pass, it needs to be approved by CMS, a federal agency, to become law. Our advocacy efforts have slightly shifted more towards the federal direction to try a different angle to lessen the negative impact.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Some other bills that passed and may be of interest include a bill altering reporting and audit requirements for charitable contributions; a measure to study participation in the Heat and Eat Program (a sub-program of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, commonly known as SNAP); and a measure altering certain certification requirements for security guards.



Some bills in which we were involved that did not pass include a bill which would have required the medical examiner to release the body of a deceased individual quickly under certain circumstances, and a bill restricting the government’s ability to burden the free exercise of religion in certain circumstances.

While this year the Daylight Savings Time issue did not come up in Annapolis, our office has been deeply involved in advocacy efforts on the national level, in light of the attempt on Capitol Hill to pass the Sunshine Protection Act. Since the Act did pass the House, advocacy efforts are now focused on the Senate.

Voting

In the lead-up to the primary election at the end of June, our office, in conjunction with the Vaad Harabbonim of Baltimore and local shuls, put forth great effort to spread voter awareness and to streamline voter participation. The robust Get Out The Vote campaign resulted in our community’s largest turnout in recent history.



CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

As always, we express our sincere appreciation to the members of the Maryland General Assembly and their dedicated staff with whom we work during the session – and throughout the year. Their dedication to their constituents is commendable, as is the graciousness they show to us and our colleagues.

For much of our legislative agenda, we are fortunate to work alongside a strong team of like-minded advocates who share our commitment and goals. We are deeply grateful for their partnership and collaboration. The work in Annapolis often involves long, challenging, and sometimes tense hours, and the trust, teamwork, and shared commitment we have built with these partners are essential to our success. We could not be nearly as effective without them.



Lastly, we remind you to be a regular visitor of our website to stay up to date on the helpful info and resources for the households and institutions of our community. There you can find details on the BOOST Program, Maryland's 529 Program, the Child Care Voucher Program, the MTA 92 bus, security grants, our election e-headquarters, and much more. Additionally, that is where you need to go to submit a constituent service request, should the need arise.

Once again, our website is: www.AgudahMD.org.

Best wishes and brocho v'hatzlocho!

Rabbi Ariel Sadwin

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ariel Sadwin".

Avi Lencz

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