



**Testimony in SUPPORT of *House Bill 537 – Income Tax –
Credit for Student Bus Transportation Expenses***
House Ways and Means Committee
February 8, 2024

The Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington (JCRC) serves as the public affairs and community relations arm of the Jewish community. We represent over 100 Jewish organizations and synagogues throughout Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The JCRC is strongly committed to cultivating a society based on freedom, justice, and pluralism. We work tirelessly throughout the entire Greater Washington area to advocate for our agencies that serve the most vulnerable residents, support our Jewish day schools and community centers, and to campaign for important policy interests on behalf of the entire Jewish community and all Marylanders.

The JCRC has a long tradition of advocating on behalf of families who enroll their children in Jewish Day Schools. Given our commitment to these students and the need to help allay the burdensome tuition cost of these nonpublic schools, we support House Bill 537. The Bill will allow an individual resident who is a parent or guardian of a school student to claim a credit against the state income tax in an equal amount to the bus transportation expenses paid or incurred by the resident during the taxable year on behalf of the student. HB 537 also stipulates that the credit may not exceed \$1500 per student and that the school must participate in the nonpublic schools textbook and technology grants program.

Paying for school bus transportation is an extremely expensive option for many families and therefore out of reach, particularly for families with multiple children. Some parents spend up to three hours per day in the car because of the need to do multiple round trips to accommodate different dismissal times for students of different ages. HB 537 would not only help offset the high cost of bus transportation, but also reduce traffic congestion, cut pollution, and make the roads safer for all. For these reasons, we ask the committee to support HB 537.