



# HoCo JAG

Howard County Jewish Advocacy Group

June 11, 2024

Dear Board of Education Members,

It has been brought to our attention that a teacher at Atholton HS required students to read aloud in class from a collection of poems about Palestine from the site: [poems\\_for\\_palestine\\_online.pdf \(publishersforpalestine.org\)](#). The site is deeply anti-Israel and its poems use the infamous "river to the sea" language and invoke the ancient antisemitic blood libel "blood that's spilling from the world's hand and mouth". It advocates for [BDS](#) and other boycotts, and explicitly asks readers to take action against Israel.

Teachers have power and influence over students; how could Jewish or Israeli students in that class have felt safe, welcome, or included? HCPSS has explicit policies regarding how controversial subjects should be addressed; is there evidence that those were followed? If not, were there consequences? What is HCPSS doing to ensure they are followed in the future?

We understand that Atholton's principal informed the teacher that she had violated policy; we appreciate that some HCPSS principals such as Mr. Novak and Mr. Motley have attempted to limit the damage done by the many antisemitic events and incidents at HCPSS schools. However, the fact that this teacher felt comfortable engaging in such outrageous and offensive activism, illustrates the inadequacy of existing policies and failure of HCPSS administration to address antisemitism effectively and protect Jewish and Israeli students and staff.

Even before October 7th, no group in America was victimized at a higher rate than Jews (see [FBI statistics](#)) and each year brings a new record high for antisemitic hate crime. Since October, 27.78% of all HoCo hate crimes reported to HCPD were committed against Jews (who are only 5.57% of the HoCo population). School antisemitism plays a significant role too: [one in ten hate crimes now occur at a school](#) with nearly  $\frac{2}{3}$  in K-12.

We implore you, as board members, to take action to protect Jewish students, to stop Howard County's children from being used as pawns in anyone's culture wars and to stop the schools from being their battlegrounds. We have lost confidence in the HCPSS office of DEI and reach out to you for help. We would welcome the opportunity to meet to discuss the issue and what could be done to address it.

Sincerely,  
Howard County Jewish Advocacy Group (HoCoJAG)  
Trevor Greene - President