

HoCo JAG

Howard County Jewish Advocacy Group

Good evening. I am Dr. Trevor Greene, speaking on behalf of the Howard County Jewish Advocacy Group. HoCoJAG is a non-partisan non-profit, focused exclusively on combating antisemitism in Howard County.

On January 16th, 2025, the US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights announced the results of its investigation into pervasive antisemitism at HCPSS schools. OCR documented numerous abuses and the failure of HCPSS to protect Jewish students, concluding that HCPSS has become a hostile environment for Jews. The investigation resulted in an agreement whereby HCPSS is required to take a range of corrective actions, many of which must commence by March, 2025.

To demonstrate seriousness about ending the hostile environment and to effectively protect students going forward, HoCoJAG believes HCPSS must undertake the following 4 actions:

1. Use a nationally recognized expert in K-12 antisemitism to develop training, policy updates, and curriculum guidance. The same people who failed to recognize and address pervasive antisemitism for more than a year can't be the ones to train others or choose those who will. HoCoJAG recommends the CAMERA Education Institute, American Jewish Committee, Anti-Defamation League, or the Brandeis Center. Here is an example of the training materials these respected organizations have created for school systems, which we would be pleased to share with you.

2. Adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition of Antisemitism into Anti-Discrimination Policy 1010. The IHRA definition is the only widely accepted definition, as it has been adopted by the federal government, 37 US states, Montgomery County Public Schools, and by Harvard University as part of its own recent settlement to mitigate rampant antisemitism.

3. Amend policy 9020, the policy governing student expression, to include clear guidelines that protect students from harm while respecting First Amendment rights consistent with the Tinker precedent. The proposed revisions include requiring student organizations to document steps taken to prevent harm to protected classes while ensuring that student expression aligns with anti-discrimination and anti-bullying policies, along with concrete consequences for student groups that fail to follow policy 9020.

4. Require HCPSS faculty and staff to attend universal, mandatory training, clarifying their obligations under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act to prevent the creation of a hostile environment for any protected class (including Jews) and enumerating concrete consequences for failure to do so.

Jewish Students should never feel unsafe in their schools. By implementing these four actions HCPSS can protect not only Jewish students but also students from all protected classes, creating a safer, more inclusive environment for everyone.

Thank you for your time and action.



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