

Good afternoon. I'm Deborah Miller, the Director of Maryland Government and Community Relations for the JCRC of Greater Washington. The JCRC represents over 100 social services agencies, synagogues, and Jewish schools throughout the region. We work to build strong relationships and coalitions with other communities in pursuit of justice, tolerance, and equity for all. I am here today in support of Expedited Bill 21-22, which aims to reduce the dramatic rise in gun violence we are witnessing every day not only across the country, but in our county.

At the JCRC, one of our highest priorities is the safety and security of all faith-based institutions, particularly Jewish houses of worship, given the unprecedented increase in antisemitism- up 34% across the nation and 17% in Maryland according to the ADL. Additionally, MCPD's latest report on religious bias incidents shows that more than 85% targeted Jews, although they only make up only 10% of the County population. The Jewish community knows all too well the devastating impact of gun violence. In addition to the horrific targeting of African Americans, Asian Americans, and the LGBT Community throughout the country, we remember the Tree of Life tragedy in where 11 members of the Jewish community were murdered.

The importance of this legislation at this time cannot be underestimated. The JCRC is deeply disappointed by the Supreme Court's ruling striking down NY's concealed weapon permit law. We believe it will pose increased risk to public safety. Houses of worship should be left to establish their own security plans. We do not want individuals who could walk in off the street with a weapon acting in their own individual capacity. It could lead to chaos and create an even more potentially deadly situation.

We will continue to advocate for common-sense gun safety measures throughout our region, because we know that the senseless violence, can only be stemmed by limiting easy access to such deadly weapons. While the Supreme Court taken a step backward to curb violence and ensure safety, we are grateful that in Montgomery County, our leaders are taking a step forward to counter this dangerous trend. Fewer guns near or inside our places of assembly will create a safer environment for all of our residents. We thank the lead sponsor, Council President Gabe Albornoz as well as the entire council for its co-sponsorship.