



July 12, 2021

Senator Joanne M. Comerford
Chairwoman
24 Beacon St.
Room 413-C
Boston, MA 02133

Representative Marjorie C. Decker
Chairwoman
24 Beacon St.
Room 130
Boston, MA 02133

RE: Testimony in Support of S.1517, *An act promoting community immunity*

Dear Chairwoman Comerford and Chairwoman Decker,

On behalf of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston (JCRC), thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in favor of S.1517, *An act promoting community immunity*, filed by Senator Rebecca L. Rausch. My name is Nahma Nadich and I serve as Deputy Director at the JCRC.

JCRC is a coalition of organizations and individuals that represent and advance the values, interests, and priorities of the organized Jewish community throughout greater Boston. Our mission is to serve as a catalyst for building a strong and vibrant Jewish community in Boston and around the world, and to promote an American society which is democratic, pluralistic, and just. *An act promoting community immunity* fits directly within the mission of our organization and our commitment to furthering social justice and equity for all those who reside in the Commonwealth.

Our support for S.1517 is based in Jewish principles of life and health. In Jewish culture, one of the most important values is *Pikuach Nefesh*, the idea that the preservation of life takes priority over all other Jewish law and teaching – and that it is a moral obligation to do whatever is feasible to save the life of someone who is at risk. The development and prevalence of vaccinations has been one of the most significant achievements in public health – eradicating

many diseases that for years caused immense suffering and widespread death. Vaccines expose the body to harmless pathogens, allowing the immune system to fortify itself when fighting off numerous diseases.

Even further than protecting the individual, immunizations help to complete a larger public health picture, one that allows for medical safety throughout a community. The more individuals with immunization, the lower the risk of infection, protecting those who may be ineligible or unable to be vaccinated, including infants and the immuno-compromised, who are particularly at risk. As you know, once these numbers reach a certain point, illnesses can be contained, achieving 'Community (or "herd") immunity'. For the more susceptible, this herd immunization is a key part of safety, especially in schools and other youth programs. As such, the state sets specific vaccination levels, in order to measure 'Community immunity', which have still yet to be reached in most places.

We also wish to condemn in the strongest terms *any* comparison of vaccination efforts to the atrocities of Holocaust and the blatant exploitation and suffering of Jewish victims. Lifesaving vaccine efforts are in no way comparable to the death and devastation of the Holocaust and any effort to make such a comparison is utterly reprehensible. Furthermore, the vast majority of the Jewish community across denominations, support vaccination efforts and believe that we should, and must, seek to achieve community immunity for key diseases to protect the most vulnerable amongst us.

S.1517 prioritizes the safety of our residents and ensures that Massachusetts maintains herd-immunity levels for preventable and deadly diseases. We support the bill's immediate passage, especially in light of the public health crisis from which we are only now beginning to emerge.

Thank you for your time and attention on this important matter.

Best,

Nahma Nadich
Deputy Director
JCRC of Greater Boston