

Remarks for Jewish Member Reception for 117th Congress
March 10, 2021

- Good evening, everyone, and thank you for joining us for this important briefing. For members of Congress, congratulations on passing the American Rescue Plan--it is so important to us, our members, and our partners.
- I am here today on behalf of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, the national network hub of the Jewish community relations field, representing 125 local community relations councils and 16 national Jewish organizations, including the four denominations of American Judaism. We convene our network to address pressing issues, drive consensus, and partner with other racial, ethnic, and faith communities as well as legislators, to build a just and pluralistic America and represent our Networks consensus view in the public square.
- We believe that securing the safety of Jews can only be achieved by ensuring a just and safe society for all - that community relations is the most effective antidote to hate. This is the principle that animates our work and makes our mission as critical today as when we were founded in 1944.
- JCPA's first 100 days recommendations focuses on our nation's path forward: combating antisemitism, racism, and hate, restoring our safety net, transforming our immigration and criminal justice systems, ending genocide, and on-going support for Israel. We will be providing your offices with our recommendations after this call.
- However, today, I would like to focus on our highest priority concerns not already addressed here today - immigration, racial justice and equity, voting rights, and criminal justice reform.
- Our immigration, refugee and asylum systems must be rebuilt to protect immigrants and ensure they are treated with dignity and respect for their human rights, health, safety, and family unity. We must undo the systems of criminalization, detention and deportation of those who seek safe haven in our country and most of all, we must keep families together. While the administration has made a number of positive changes, Congress must also take action, and we look forward to working with your offices as immigration bills advance in the coming weeks.
- The pandemic has highlighted the racial disparities that exist in our country and need to be addressed. Fighting against racial injustice and discriminatory policies is a cornerstone of Jewish community relations work, and we continue to prioritize advancing civil rights and racial justice.
- Around the country, we are facilitating spaces for Black and Jewish leaders to come together to share experiences, build trust, and align their policy priorities. Our mandate is clear, we must shift to a restorative justice approach to public safety and invest in social services, including education, housing, employment, health care, and other public

benefits. We urge Members of Congress to apply a racial justice lens to all of these issues.

- JCPA believes a strong vibrant democracy is crucial to Jewish safety. We are alarmed that more than 31 states are moving to restrict voting rights to a degree not seen since the Jim Crow era. It is imperative that Congress restore and strengthen the full voting rights act and implement sweeping democracy reforms to prevent voting suppression. The success of recent reforms in driving the largest voter turnout in US history demonstrates the need for these changes.
- Five years ago, JCPA launched a criminal justice initiative to end mass incarceration, bridge the growing gap between our emerging leaders and engage the Jewish community in what has become today's civil rights movement. We understood from our relationships with Black communities that this was of critical importance and that we, as partners, had to engage.
- The U.S. is the world's leading incarcerator, imprison Blacks five times more than whites. Our current system devastates individuals, families, and communities.
- JCPA's national network of Jewish criminal justice experts will be unveiling at our national conference on April 25-26, a Jewish values framework signed by notables from around the country. Our Jewish commitments to fairness, mercy, and restoration demand that we raise our voices and act in accordance with our history and teachings, to seek justice for all people. We hope you will join us in prioritizing this issue, beginning with improving police practices and reducing mandatory minimum sentences.
- Ensuring justice and equity for all, in coalition with diverse partners, is how we will defeat hate and build a better society. The time to act is now!
- Thank you.