

## JCRC Legislative Forum

Buffalo JCRC held their first JCRC Legislative Forum on February 18th to introduce their work, highlight issues of concern to the Jewish community, and forge an ongoing dialogue with WNY State Delegation. The 50 person virtual forum focused on three priority areas: combatting antisemitism and hate, social justice and equity, and welcoming Afghan evacuees. It also emphasized the strong relationships JCRC builds with its community partners.

The forum featured Susan DeMari, Jewish Buffalo Security Coordinator, who discussed the rise of antisemitism and hate. Susan thanked the NYS legislature for their additional \$25 million in state security funds and for administering the Federal Nonprofit Security Grant Program. Her focus is on developing community preparedness and training protocols and building strong relationships with all levels of law enforcement.

Adam Fogel, Co-Chair JCRC, discussed social justice and equity, encouraging NYS Legislators to pass the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act of New York and a bill that would require counting affidavit ballots of eligible voters if a voter appears at a polling place in the correct county but incorrect election district. He also encouraged WNY Legislators to pass bills that would establish the office of racial equity and social justice and establish a model racial equity, social justice, and implicit bias training program.

Molly Carr, CEO of Jewish Family Service of WNY, focused on supporting Afghan evacuees. She advocated for \$6 million in funding for New York State Enhanced Services for Refugee Program (NYSERP) to support integration and self-sufficiency work of refugees and Afghan evacuees.

The forum included an opportunity for legislators to introduce themselves: Senator Tim Kennedy (Senate District 63), Senator Robert Ort (Senate District 62), Senator Sean Ryan (Senate District 60), Senator Edward Rath (Senate District 61), Assembly Member Karen McMahon (Assembly District 146), and Assembly Member William Conrad (Assembly District 140), as well as the staff members of Governor Kathy Hochul.

Deborah Goldman, co-chair of JCRC closed the forum with Q&A where many community members asked questions for legislators. JCRC looks forward to future legislative forums to continue building relationships with our elected officials.

If you would like to see the recording, please contact, [Mara@buffalofjewishfederation.org](mailto:Mara@buffalofjewishfederation.org).