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**Written Testimony**

**Senate Bill 160 - Human Services – Temporary Cash Assistance – Calculation of Benefits**

**Senate Finance Committee – February 1, 2023**

**Support**

**Background: Senate Bill 160** would require local departments of social services to disregard 100% of the amount of certain housing subsidies in the calculation of the amount of Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) for eligible recipients. Currently in these cases, benefits are cut by roughly \$60/month.

**Written Comments:** The Baltimore Jewish Council represents The Associated: Jewish Federation of Baltimore and all of its agencies. This includes Jewish Community Services (JCS), which provides social services to low-income Marylanders.

Maryland has one of the highest rates of deep poverty in the country, with almost 50% of those living in poverty being considered as living in deep poverty. It is these individuals and families who receive public benefits such as TCA—providing cash assistance to families with dependent children when available resources do not fully address the family's needs, and while preparing program participants for independence through work.

Decreasing TCA benefits also hurts Maryland's businesses, communities, and local economies. Recipients use their benefits to purchase food; subsidize transportation; pay for utilities; etc. Most families receiving TCA funds will immediately spend their benefits in the local economy, generating economic growth.

Additionally, low-income families should not be punished for accessing more than one safety net program. Decreasing a families' TCA benefit means they will have a difficult time building the economic security necessary to transition off TCA permanently.

SB160 will put Maryland in line with other states; increase the budgets of low-income families; and improve our state's economy overall. **For these reasons, the Baltimore Jewish Councils asks for a favorable report on SB160.**

*The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.*