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Budget and Taxation Committee
Chair, Capital Budget Subcommittee

Chair, Senate Democratic Caucus

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony of Senator Craig J. Zucker
Senate Bill 445 - Maryland Department of Health - 2-1-1 Maryland - Oversight
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
February 8th, 2024
1:00 PM
Position: Favorable

Good afternoon, Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and distinguished members of the committee. It is my pleasure to testify today in **support of Senate Bill 445 - Maryland Department of Health - 2-1-1 Maryland - Oversight.**

2-1-1 Maryland is the only entity in the state that provides 24/7/365 connection to vital health and human services, such as suicide and crisis intervention, food resources, housing and shelter, aging & disabilities, and much more. Senate Bill 445 transfers oversight from the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) back to the 2-1-1 board, as intended by the Thomas Bloom Raskin Act which passed unanimously in the House and Senate in 2021.

Over the years, 2-1-1 Maryland has evolved into the Maryland Information Network, establishing itself as the state's central hub for connecting residents to a broad array of human service programs. This transformation has enabled us to serve Marylanders more effectively, ensuring they have access to the support they need, when they need it. As part of this evolution, board membership has expanded to ensure more comprehensive oversight and better alignment with the diverse needs of our communities.

The value of the 2-1-1 system as a trusted resource for state agencies continues to grow. For instance, their partnership with the Maryland Primary Care Program under the Maryland Department of Health has significantly improved access to dependable health and human service resources. Additionally, the Behavioral Health Administration's recent expansion of care coordination services through 2-1-1 exemplifies their system's critical role in addressing the state's health service needs.

As 2-1-1 Maryland continues to grow and more Marylanders seek out resources, Senate Bill 445 will assist 2-1-1 in effectively carrying out their mission and connecting Marylanders to important services they need. For these reasons, **I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 445.** Thank you for your kind consideration.