



**Testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 1033 –
*Maryland Building Performance Standards – Local Requests for Guidance – Religious
Considerations*
The Education, Environment and Energy Committee
March 1, 2024**

The Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington (JCRC) serves as the public affairs and community relations arm of the Jewish community. We represent over 100 Jewish organizations, synagogues, and social services agencies throughout Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The JCRC is strongly committed to cultivating a society based on freedom, justice, and pluralism. We work throughout the region to advocate for our agencies that serve the most vulnerable residents and to campaign for important policy interests on behalf of the Jewish community and all Marylanders.

The JCRC is committed to religious liberty and everyone's right to practice their religion as protected by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. On behalf of the Jewish community, we support Senate Bill 1033 which requests religious considerations for implementation of some Maryland Building Performance Standards, specifically permanent installation of motion sensor technology to regulate light fixtures in both commercial and residential buildings.

For our Orthodox community, this requirement, without flexibility and respect for religious observance, could severely impact a Jewish person's Sabbath observance. During the approximate 25-hour period of the Sabbath (from sunset on Friday to nightfall on Saturday) Orthodox observance forbids engaging in work/creation including any action is causing electrical activity. Therefore, physical action that results in the altering of electricity is forbidden. For example, and as is relevant here, if a room has a light triggered by a motion sensor, it would be a violation of the Sabbath to enter the room if entering the room leads to triggering the motion sensor that turns on the light. If one is already in the room, getting up to leave would similarly be problematic as one's action in leaving the room indirectly causes the light to turn off, another prohibited act.

With this explanation, it is easy to understand why aspects of the Maryland Building Performance Standards pose a serious issue for Orthodox Jews in our community who strictly observe the laws of the Sabbath. For these reasons, we ask the committee to give a favorable report on SB 1033.

