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WRITTEN TESTIMONY

**Senate Bill 223 – Department of Aging - Social Connections
Program - Establishment
Finance Committee
January 22, 2025
Support**

Background: Senate Bill 223 would revise and expand the 2017 senior call-check service program for eligible seniors in Maryland through the management and direction of the Department of Aging. While the current program reaches about 2,000 Marylanders over the age of 65 a day via automated calls, this bill would make more people eligible for the program, including those with disabilities, limited English proficiency and older adults under the age of 65. Further, SB223 increases service options to include not just phone calls but text, web-based and in person communications.

Written Comments: The Baltimore Jewish Council represents Comprehensive Housing Assistance, Inc. (CHAI) which directs the “adopt a neighbor” program in Baltimore. This program matches seniors with volunteers in their community who regularly call, visit and even help with household maintenance. Unfortunately, many seniors do not have access to this type of support network, and can become isolated, putting them at risk if they fall, become ill or are isolated. Some low-income seniors may make the difficult choice to enter a nursing facility to avoid this risk, costing the state and federal government a combined \$120,000 a year on average. SB223 would help avert these costs by keeping Marylanders in their homes, where they can comfortably age-in-place without the risk of an unreported illness, injury or isolation

With this in mind, the Baltimore Jewish Council urges a favorable report of SB223.

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.