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## WRITTEN TESTIMONY

### Senate Bill 987 (SB987) – Racing and Community Development Act of 2020

### Senate Budget & Taxation Committee February 25, 2020

## SUPPORT

**Background:** SB987 lays out a vision for a redesigned and rebuilt Pimlico Race Course that offers modernized facilities for the Preakness, as well as ways to use the property year-round — athletic fields in the infield; spaces for community meetings, arts festivals, concerts and banquets; and parcels for mixed-use commercial, retail and residential development, such as a supermarket, family and senior housing, office space and more. The plan would also provide for a new clubhouse, training facilities, stables and housing for track workers at Laurel Park, and donate the Bowie Training Center to government and education entities for primarily recreational uses. The plan is the result of extensive negotiations by city leaders, the owners of the Maryland Jockey Club, and horse racing industry stakeholders.

**Written Comments:** Northwest Baltimore faces a pivotal moment for its future, and this legislation promises to bring a renaissance of economic opportunities and resources to the Northwest Baltimore community. HB1056 ensures the historic Preakness Stakes stays in Baltimore, offers a clear vision for horse racing's future in Maryland, and creates the kind of momentum that is critical for redeveloping and strengthening Central Park Heights and beyond. The redevelopment of the Pimlico site is an extraordinary job-creating opportunity during construction and the many years that follow.

The Jewish community has long believed that Pimlico and the Preakness play critical roles in the economic vitality of both the nearby neighborhoods of Northwest Baltimore and greater Baltimore City. Over the last 30 plus years, tens of millions of public, private and foundation dollars have been invested in strengthening the neighborhoods of Park Heights. Less than a mile away from Pimlico, The Associated maintains multimillion dollars of investment in the Jewish Community Center, as well as offices for such agencies as Jewish Community Services, the Baltimore Jewish Council and CHAI (Comprehensive Housing Assistance, Inc.). Also within a mile of the track, CHAI owns and operates a number of apartment buildings for seniors, and has millions of dollars on loan to homeowners who purchased and/or renovated their houses with CHAI's assistance. CHAI is investing in maintaining and developing housing

stock in the area through its Senior Home Repair, Housing Upgrades to Benefit Seniors and acquisition and rehab programs.

This is about more than just racing. It's about community investment. This plan will help ensure that Pimlico — and the communities of Park Heights — will be a vital part of the future of Baltimore City for many decades to come.

With this in mind, the Baltimore Jewish Council urges a favorable report on SB987.

*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.*