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Budget and Taxation Committee

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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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Testimony of Senator Craig J. Zucker
Senate Bill- 584 – Health and Human Services Referral System – Modifications
Senate Finance Committee
February 27th, 2020
1:00pm
Position: SUPPORT

Good afternoon Chairman Kelley, Vice Chairman Feldman, and distinguished members of the committee. It is my pleasure to testify today in **support of Senate Bill 584 – Health and Human Services Referral System – Modifications.**

The Maryland 2-1-1 was established in statute in 2010 and has served millions of Marylanders since then. The Health and Human Services Referral Board (HHSRB) was created statutorily and charged with providing guidance and oversight to the program.

This legislation eliminates the statutory cap on the number of call centers that can be included in the 2-1-1 network, transitions the oversight and guidance functions from the Health and Human Services Referral Board to the 2-1-1 Board in consultation with the Maryland Department of Health. It also requires the Department to study the cost of providing the call in services.

The amount of State funds committed to the 2-1-1 program remained consistent at about \$3 million annually until 2018 when we committed funding from the Behavioral Health budget to the use 2-1-1 services to address the opioid crisis. Unfortunately, the use of those funds were restricted and could not be used to support the other kinds of calls received. For this reason, we are amending this bill to ask for a study of how much this service will cost.

I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 584. Thank you for your kind consideration.