

## OFFICERS

YEHUDA NEUBERGER  
President

RABBI ANDREW BUSCH  
1<sup>st</sup> Vice President

ELIZABETH GREEN  
2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President

ABBA DAVID POLLAKOFF  
Past President

BENJAMIN ROSENBERG

THE HON. CHAYA FRIEDMAN

ROBIN WEIMAN

RABBI STEVEN SCHWARTZ

HOWARD LIBIT  
Executive Director

## MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Adat Chaim Congregation  
American Jewish Committee  
Americans for Peace Now  
Baltimore Chapter  
American Israel Public Affairs Committee  
American Red Magen David for Israel  
American Zionist Movement  
Amit Women  
Association of Reform Zionists of America  
Baltimore Board of Rabbis  
Baltimore Hebrew Congregation  
Baltimore Jewish Green and Just Alliance  
Baltimore Men's ORT  
Baltimore Zionist District  
Beth Am Congregation  
Beth El Congregation  
Beth Israel Congregation  
Beth Shalom Congregation of  
Howard County  
Beth Tfiloh Congregation  
B'nai B'rith, Chesapeake Bay Region  
B'nai Israel Congregation  
B'nai Jacob Shaarei Zion Congregation  
Bolton Street Synagogue  
Chevra Ahavas Chesed, Inc.  
Chevrei Tzedek Congregation  
Chizuk Amuno Congregation  
Congregation Beit Tikvah  
Congregation Beth Shalom of  
Carroll County  
Congregation Tiferes Yisroel  
Federation of Jewish Women's  
Organizations of Maryland  
Hadassah  
Har Sinai Congregation  
J Street  
Jewish Federation of Howard County  
Jewish Labor Committee  
Jewish War Veterans  
Jewish War Veterans, Ladies Auxiliary  
Jewish Women International  
Jews For Judaism  
Moses Montefiore Anshe Emunah  
Hebrew Congregation  
National Council of Jewish Women  
Ner Tamid Congregation  
Rabbinical Council of America  
Religious Zionists of America  
Shaarei Tfiloh Congregation  
Shomrei Emunah Congregation  
Simon E. Sobeloff Jewish Law Society  
Suburban Orthodox Congregation  
Temple Beth Shalom  
Temple Isaiah  
Temple Oheb Shalom  
Winands Road Synagogue Center  
Zionist Organization of America  
Baltimore District

# WRITTEN TESTIMONY

## House Bill 833 (HB833) - Divorce and Annulment - Removal of Barriers to Remarriage

### House Judiciary Committee

#### February 20, 2020

## SUPPORT

**Background:** HB833 requires a person who files a complaint for an absolute divorce or annulment to file an affidavit stating that the affiant has taken, or will take before the entry of final judgment, all steps within the affiant's control to remove all barriers to remarriage by the other party, or an affidavit stating that the other party has, in writing, waived the submission of an affidavit with respect to the removal of barriers. The bill also permits the person who filed a complaint to request the other party to submit an affidavit with respect to the removal of barriers.

**Written Comments:** The Baltimore Jewish Council represents The Associated: Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore and its agencies. Through the agency CHANA, the Jewish response to abuse, trauma and neglect, community members of all ages are able to receive crisis intervention, legal services and counseling on sexual and domestic abuse.

For many years, CHANA has worked with Jewish women who face financial, mental, physical and/or verbal abuse because their husbands refuse to grant them a "get" or Jewish divorce document. A get is a writ of Jewish divorce which terminates a marriage and enables the parties to remarry under Jewish law. It may only be presented by a husband to his wife. Without a get, neither party can remarry, and their children are considered illegitimate. Women often feel forced to stay in their bad marriages or to take an unfavorable and often coercive civil divorce settlement in order to receive their get from their husbands.

While most men are willing to grant a get at the time of civil divorce, for those who do not, their civil ex-wives are known as "agunot" – or chained women – and they face many hardships, as their vengeful ex-husbands can exploit the get process for leverage related to alimony, visitation rights or domestic abuse charges. Some ex-husbands simply want to hold the power over their ex-wives to block them from finding happiness – a clear example of domestic abuse.

While the Jewish community has worked on various non-legislative solutions, that has not been enough in some extreme cases. This legislative approach – similar to what has been working effectively in New York – offers a common-

## OFFICERS

YEHUDA NEUBERGER  
President

RABBI ANDREW BUSCH  
1<sup>st</sup> Vice President

ELIZABETH GREEN  
2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President

ABBA DAVID POLLAKOFF  
Past President

BENJAMIN ROSENBERG  
THE HON. CHAYA FRIEDMAN  
ROBIN WEIMAN  
RABBI STEVEN SCHWARTZ  
HOWARD LIBIT  
Executive Director

## MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Adat Chaim Congregation  
American Jewish Committee  
Americans for Peace Now  
    Baltimore Chapter  
American Israel Public Affairs Committee  
American Red Magen David for Israel  
American Zionist Movement  
Amit Women  
Association of Reform Zionists of America  
Baltimore Board of Rabbis  
Baltimore Hebrew Congregation  
Baltimore Jewish Green and Just Alliance  
Baltimore Men's ORT  
Baltimore Zionist District  
Beth Am Congregation  
Beth El Congregation  
Beth Israel Congregation  
Beth Shalom Congregation of  
    Howard County  
Beth Tfiloh Congregation  
B'nai B'rith, Chesapeake Bay Region  
B'nai Israel Congregation  
B'nai Jacob Shaarei Zion Congregation  
Bolton Street Synagogue  
Chevra Ahavas Chesed, Inc.  
Chevrei Tzedek Congregation  
Chizuk Amuno Congregation  
Congregation Beit Tikvah  
Congregation Beth Shalom of  
    Carroll County  
Congregation Tiferes Yisroel  
Federation of Jewish Women's  
    Organizations of Maryland  
Hadassah  
Har Sinai Congregation  
J Street  
Jewish Federation of Howard County  
Jewish Labor Committee  
Jewish War Veterans  
Jewish War Veterans, Ladies Auxiliary  
Jewish Women International  
Jews For Judaism  
Moses Montefiore Anshe Emunah  
    Hebrew Congregation  
National Council of Jewish Women  
Ner Tamid Congregation  
Rabbinical Council of America  
Religious Zionists of America  
Shaarei Tfiloh Congregation  
Shomrei Emunah Congregation  
Simon E. Sobeloff Jewish Law Society  
Suburban Orthodox Congregation  
Temple Beth Shalom  
Temple Isaiah  
Temple Oheb Shalom  
Winands Road Synagogue Center  
Zionist Organization of America  
    Baltimore District



sense solution to ending the abusive situation faced by some observant women. When someone seeks a civil divorce, he or she must not maintain a barrier that would prevent their spouse from similarly carrying on with his or her life. This bill would also achieve the important societal purpose of encouraging the formation of new families after the dissolution of a marriage.

With this in mind, the Baltimore Jewish Council urges a favorable report on HB833.

***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.***

BALTIMORE JEWISH COUNCIL

5750 Park Heights Avenue, Suite 329 • Baltimore, Maryland 21215  
410-542-4850 • fax 410-542-4834 • baltjc.org

Member of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs

Baltimore Jewish Council is an agency of The Associated

