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WRITTEN TESTIMONY

House Bill 396 – Child Care Centers – Early Childhood Screening For Developmental Disabilities

Ways and Means Committee – February 19, 2020

SUPPORT

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Winands Road Synagogue Center
Zionist Organization of America
Baltimore District

Background: House Bill 396 (HB396) would ensure that all licensed child care centers in the state are able to offer screenings for developmental disorders to the children enrolled at that center. Each center would be required to have at least one staff member who has completed a State Department of Education approved training on conducting screenings for developmental disabilities. Furthermore, child care centers would be required to offer to each parent, the opportunity to have their child screened for developmental disabilities.

Written Comments: There is no doubt that developmental disabilities have a great impact on our community, and on families, which is why it is imperative that we are able to detect these disabilities as early as possible. Nationwide it is estimated that nearly one in six children are born with a developmental disability. In Maryland we have seen children diagnosed with autism at a rate of one in 50, according to the Centers for Disease Control. In 2018, Maryland had the second highest rate of autism diagnoses in America. As the legislative arm of The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, we represent the Center for Jewish Education, Jewish Community Services, two agencies which serve individuals and families impacted by developmental disabilities.

No parent expects their child to be diagnosed with a developmental disability, however the reality is that we will continue to see more and more diagnoses. As devastating as the news may be, when a family learns that their child has a developmental disability earlier in that child's life, the better the future will be for them. Having this service available to them will ensure that the child can receive the services they need early on. This bill not only ensures they are screened for developmental disabilities, but if they are found to have any, they will be referred to the appropriate support services.

As a State we have an obligation to ensure children with developmental disabilities are able to live their lives fully and with dignity. With this in mind, the Baltimore Jewish Council urges a favorable report of HB396.

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.