



**Testimony in SUPPORT of *House Bill 15* –
Governor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs
Appropriations Committee
January 27, 2021**

The Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington (JCRC) serves as the public affairs and community relations arm of the Jewish community. We represent over 100 Jewish organizations and synagogues throughout Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The JCRC is strongly committed to cultivating a society based on freedom, justice, and pluralism. We work tirelessly throughout the entire Greater Washington area to advocate for our agencies that serve the most vulnerable residents, support our Jewish day schools and community centers, and to campaign for important policy interests on behalf of the entire Jewish community.

Deuteronomy 23:16-17 says, *“You shall not deliver unto his master an enslaved person that has escaped from his master unto you. He shall dwell with you, in your midst, in the place that he shall choose within one of your gates that seems good to him; you shall not mistreat him.”* Beginning with that unyielding Biblical injunction and continuing throughout our people’s history, Jewish law and tradition has embraced the stranger and demanded that we help those in need.

House bill 15 establishes the Office of Immigrant Affairs to create a network of neighborhood-based opportunity centers providing immigration services, assist immigrants in matters relating to their status, assist law enforcement in combating crimes against immigrants, and promote civic and economic participation among immigrant communities. The JCRC has a long tradition of supporting measures that welcome immigrants into our midst as they add immeasurably to the rich tapestry of our nation. For these reasons, we urge a favorable vote on HB 15.

