



**Testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 286 – Behavioral Health Crisis
Response Services - Modifications
Finance and Budget and Taxation Committees
February 9, 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.

Senate Bill 286 requires the Maryland Department of Health to require that proposals requesting Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program funding contain certain response standards that minimize law enforcement interaction for individuals in crisis. The Bill also alters the proposals the Department is required to prioritize in awarding grants under the Program. Furthermore, SB 286 requires a local behavioral health authority, for each service or program that receives funding under the Program, to make certain information available to the public.

The JCRC has a long history of advocating for those with disabilities and mental health issues. The agency is also proud of its positive relations with law enforcement, understanding the essential role police play in protecting the safety and security of the Jewish community and community at large. At the same time, the JCRC acknowledges the need for alternative processes for dealing with people in crisis, particularly alternatives to police involvement in mental health crisis situations. For these reasons, we ask the committees to give a favorable report on SB 286.