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Written Testimony

Senate Bill 522 State and Local Parks – Child Safe Zone Program – Establishment (Equitable Access to Safe Parks Act)

Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee - March 1, 2022

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Support

Background: Senate Bill 522, (SB522) would establish the Child Safe Zone Program housed in Department of Natural Resources. It would also fund the program at a minimum of \$1 million dollars in the state budget. The purpose of the Child Safe Zone Program would be to install signs at parks to identify areas as “Child Safe Zones.” This would enhance public safety for children and families in Maryland. The Fund would be used for both capital and operating items to enhance public safety in State parks at “Child Safe Zones.” It would also give grants to local governments for similar improvements in local parks to create these safe zones. These enhancements could include, lighting, camera, landscaping, as well as staff, including security personnel.

Written Comments: An investment in park safety is an investment in community. The Baltimore Jewish Council represents the Associated Jewish Federation of Baltimore and all of its agencies, including Comprehensive Housing Inc., (CHAI). CHAI is a nonprofit housing and community development organization that plays an integral role in the redevelopment of Northwest Baltimore. By making improvements to parks for safety, they become more accessible and enhance the overall community. Maryland children and families would be more likely to explore the outdoors and invest in other businesses and community assets near the parks.

Because of the improvements that the Child Safe Zone Program and Fund would bring to communities, the Baltimore Jewish Council asks for a favorable report on SB522.

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

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