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WRITTEN TESTIMONY

Senate Bill 829 – Department of Human Services - Family Investment Administration – Contract and Program Review

Finance Committee

March 10, 2022

SUPPORT

Background: Senate Bill 829, (SB829) would require the Department of Human Services to hire a consultant to review the Temporary Cash Assistance Program (TCA). The consultant would look at the TCA program to make sure it is using best practices when it comes to trauma-informed, anti-racist and client centered assessments. The bill also requires the Department to review annually their contract with workforce vendors to make sure they are providing real job skills that will lead to job opportunities for TCA recipients.

Written Comments: The Baltimore Jewish Council represents The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore and all of its agencies, including Jewish Community Services (JCS), which provides social services to low-income Marylanders. Maryland has one of the highest rates of Deep Poverty in the country, with almost 50% of those living in poverty, living in deep poverty. It is these individuals and families who receive public benefits such as TCA. TCA, while a vital safety-net for those living in deep poverty, has not created a means to get out of poverty. TCA was created to help those in need receive job skills to pull them out poverty, by requiring residents to participate in federally defined work activities. However, the program has not created these outcomes. In fact, 80% of TCA recipients five years after receiving TCA are still living in poverty. This program needs to be reviewed to figure out how outcomes can be improved. SB829 aims to do this by hiring an outside consultant to review the program and requiring annual reviews of contracted TCA program vendors.

For these reasons, the Baltimore Jewish Councils asks for a favorable report on SB829.

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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