



**Testimony in SUPPORT of *House Bill 1171 – Declaration of Rights –
Right to Reproductive Liberty***
Health and Government Operations Committee
February 22, 2022

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, synagogues, and social services agencies 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 throughout the region to advocate for our agencies that serve the most vulnerable residents and to campaign for important policy interests on behalf of the Jewish community and all Marylanders. The JCRC is focused on promoting social justice and intergroup relations and combating antisemitism and all forms of hatred.

In our ongoing effort to strengthen Maryland’s reproductive freedom laws, the JCRC supports House Bill 1171— Declaration of Rights – Right to Reproductive Liberty. Our agency is committed to religious liberty and upholding one’s constitutional right to reproductive freedom, that is, abortion and contraception. While the State of Maryland codified *Roe v. Wade* in 1992, not everyone in the state has access to safe and affordable abortion care. We need to truly ensure reproductive freedom for all Marylanders including accessibility, safety, and affordability.

House Bill 1171 proposes an amendment to the Maryland Constitution to establish that every person, as a central component of the individual's rights to liberty and equality, has the fundamental right to reproductive liberty. This right includes but is not limited to the ability to prevent, continue, or end their pregnancy. HB 1171 also prohibits the State from directly or indirectly denying, burdening, or abridging the right unless justified by a compelling State interest achieved by the least restrictive means. Additionally, HB 1171 submits the amendment to qualified voters at the next general election to be held in November of 2022. Although the State of Maryland already has codified reproductive freedom laws, we need to guarantee that this religious freedom is ensured for all. For these reasons, we ask the committee to give a favorable report on HB 1171.