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WRITTEN TESTIMONY

House Bill 148 - Criminal Law – Stalking

Judiciary Committee - January 27, 2022

SUPPORT

Background: House Bill 148 (HB148) would modernize the definition of stalking to include electronic communications as defined in § 3–805 as well as devices that can track someone's location without their knowledge or consent. With the ever-expanding use of electronic devices for communication and tracking, it has become more difficult for victims of stalking to escape the harmful reach of their perpetrators. HB148 simply expands the definition of stalking to include the current reality that stalking does not require a physical presence.

Written Comments: The Baltimore Jewish Council advocates on behalf of CHANA, an agency of the Associated Jewish Federation of Baltimore. For over 20 years, CHANA has provided crisis intervention to victims of physical, financial and emotional abuse in the greater Baltimore area. The rapid increase in electronic communication and tracking devices as a means to stalk victims has made it extremely difficult to provide relief to these clients under the current law. Stalking is often used in conjunction with the types of abuse, intimidating and isolating victims as a part of a dangerous power dynamic. Since electronic communication has no physical boundaries, this not only affects the home lives of victims but their productivity and attendance in the workplace as well. A change in the law through HB148 would allow victims the necessary relief they require to live their lives free from fear and intimidation.

With this in mind, the Baltimore Jewish Council urges a favorable report on HB148.

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

5750 Park Heights Avenue, Suite 329 • Baltimore, Maryland 21215

410-542-4850 • fax 410-542-4834 • baltjc.org

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