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Written Testimony

House Bill 502 - Prevent Electronic Benefits Theft Act of 2023
Appropriations Committee – February 21, 2023

Support with Sponsor Amendments

Background: House Bill 502 would require:

- the Department of Human Services (DHS) to reimburse an individual for any benefits fraudulently lost from their Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card;
- the State to give preference to certain vendors in the procurement process for electronic benefits distribution or administration; and
- DHS to establish a certain point of contact for investigating and identifying electronic benefits fraud, including retroactive cases.

Written Comments: The Baltimore Jewish Council represents The Associated Jewish Federation of Baltimore and all of its agencies. This includes Jewish Community Services (JCS), which provides social services to low-income Marylanders.

Maryland has one of the highest rates of poverty in the country, with almost 50% of those living in poverty being considered as living in *deep* poverty. A majority of these individuals receive either SNAP benefits or TCA benefits. According to data provided by the State, over \$1M of these benefits were stolen over the course of 2022.

It is imperative that the Department of Human Services take the necessary steps to restore all benefits fraudulently lost. These vulnerable families, who rely heavily on these programs to support their families, cannot be subjected to discrepancies in the amount available to them through their EBT cards.

In order to ensure that no Marylander is left behind, the Baltimore Jewish Councils asks for a favorable report on HB502 with the Sponsor's amendments.

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.