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**WRITTEN TESTIMONY**

**House Bill 630 - Public Utilities - Primary and Secondary Account Holders  
 - Domestic Violence Protections**

**Economic Matters Committee - February 16, 2023**

**FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**

**Background:** House Bill 630, (HB630) would require a utility company to release an account holder from a contract without incurring a fee, penalty or charge if the account holder provides a written statement that they are a victim of domestic violence.

**Written Comments:** The Baltimore Jewish Council represents the Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore and its agencies, including CHANA. CHANA is a domestic violence, sexual abuse, and elder abuse agency that serves the citizens of Greater Baltimore. People in abusive relationships come to CHANA because they want to know their options and rights. HB630 would be of substantial benefit to clients who are attempting to leave their abusive partners and build a new life. They are often saddled with their partner's debt and therefore can't open a utility account for their new home. *CHANA is in favor of this bill with amendments as we have concerns about the process of removing the victim from the account.* We would support an amendment that protected against the abusive partner being notified immediately or in the recent future after the victim is removed from the account. If the abusive partner were to learn that the victim was preparing to leave, this would substantially escalate the danger for the victim as separation is a lethality factor.

For these reasons, we support HB630 with amendments to ensure victim safety and confidentiality.

***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.***

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