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Written Testimony

**House Bill 323 - Social Services Programs - Eligibility and Enrollment
 House Economic Matters Committee – February 16, 2023**

Support

Background: House Bill 323 would alter the eligibility requirements for the electric universal service program; require the Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP) to automatically enroll eligible individuals in the available assistance programs; and require the Department of Human Services (DHS) to automatically enroll those who meet certain financial eligibility requirements in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

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 being considered as living in *deep* poverty. HB323 will provide needed support through the adjustment of eligibility for fuel and/or energy assistance programs to customers with annual incomes at or below 200% of the federal poverty level. With the added requirement of automatic enrollment in eligible programs under OHEP, we will ensure that those who need this assistance will actually receive it.

Additionally, by requiring DHS to automatically enroll those who are eligible for SNAP benefits into the program, the State of Maryland would provide millions of dollars of SNAP benefits to low-income households, increasing food security across the state for vulnerable populations.

For these reasons, the Baltimore Jewish Councils asks for a favorable report on HB323.

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.