



**Testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 798 – Declaration of Rights –
Right to Reproductive Freedom
Finance Committee
March 1, 2023**

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 Senate Bill 798 — Declaration of Rights – Right to Reproductive Freedom. 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. Additionally, in light of the June 2022 U.S. Supreme Court *Dobbs* decision which overturned a woman's constitutionally protected right to an abortion, the JCRC believes it is critical to unequivocally support SB 798. Although the *Dobbs* decision does not impact Maryland law, it does add an urgency to enshrining abortion rights in the State's constitution, if approved by voters at the ballot box in 2024.

Senate Bill 798 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 freedom. This right includes but is not limited to the ability to prevent, continue, or end their pregnancy. SB 798 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. 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 SB 798.