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Written Testimony

**HB504 - Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council – Establishment
 House Health and Government Operations Committee – February 28, 2023**

Support

Background: HB504 would establish the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council to promote inclusive communities and equity in services for individuals with disabilities in the State; research best practices and provide related training and technical assistance to communities in the State; and inform State and local leaders about disability issues.

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 counseling, advocacy, and case management services to adults, and families of individuals with disabilities. Other services include assistance with independent living skills, tutoring, and locating and obtaining special equipment. JCS works with the Developmental Disability Administration (DDA) to obtain and fund resources and services.

Additionally, JCS has residences established to enable adults with developmental disabilities to live as independently as possible and participate fully in community life. Currently, JCS operates nine professionally staffed homes, each with 3 to 4 participants, in Northwest Baltimore City and Baltimore County who receive residential funding from the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA).

As large advocates and supporters of the developmental disability community, this agency of the Associated would benefit greatly from the establishment of the Council proposed in HB504 for guidance, best practices, training, and more.

The Associated strives to foster a welcoming and inclusive community for all community members, and as such, supporting people of all abilities, their caregivers, and loved ones is a priority. Disability impacts all of us. According to the CDC, 25.6% of adults in the U.S. and 21.5% of adults in Maryland have some type of disability (*Disability & Health U.S. State Profile Data for Maryland (Adults 18+ years of age)*). **For these reasons, the Baltimore Jewish Councils asks for a favorable report on HB504.**

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.