



OFFICERS

ROBIN WEIMAN
President

RICHARD GRATZ
SARAH GROSSMAN
AMALIA HONICK

RABBI STEVEN SCHWARTZ
RABBI JONATHAN SEIDEMANN
MELANIE SHAPIRO

ELIZABETH GREEN
Past President

HOWARD LIBIT
Executive Director

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- Adar Chaim Congregation
- American Jewish Committee
- Americans for Peace Now
Baltimore Chapter
- American Israel Public Affairs Committee
- American Red Magen David for Israel
- American Zionist Movement
- Amit Women
- Association of Reform Zionists of America
- Baltimore Board of Rabbis
- Baltimore Hebrew Congregation
- Baltimore Jewish Green and Just Alliance
- Baltimore Men's ORT
- Baltimore Zionist District
- Beth Am Congregation
- Beth El Congregation
- Beth Israel Congregation
- Beth Shalom Congregation of
Howard County
- Beth Tfiloh Congregation
- Bnai Brith, Chesapeake Bay Region
- Bnai Israel Congregation
- Bnai Jacob Shaarei Zion Congregation
- Bolton Street Synagogue
- Chevre Ahavas Chesed, Inc.
- Chevrei Tzedek Congregation
- Chizuk Amuno Congregation
- Congregation Beir Tikvah
- Congregation Tiferes Yisroel
- Federation of Jewish Women's
Organizations of Maryland
- Hadassah
- Har Sinai - Oheb Shalom Congregation
- J Street
- Jewish Federation of Howard County
- Jewish Labor Committee
- Jewish War Veterans
- Jewish War Veterans, Ladies Auxiliary
- Jewish Women International
- Jews For Judaism
- Moses Montefiore Anshe Emunah
Hebrew Congregation
- National Council of Jewish Women
- Ner Tamid Congregation
- Rabbinical Council of America
- Religious Zionists of America
- Shaarei Tfiloh Congregation
- Shomrei Emunah Congregation
- Suburban Orthodox Congregation
- Temple Beth Shalom
- Temple Isaiah
- Zionist Organization of America
Baltimore District

WRITTEN TESTIMONY
SB495 - Newborn Screening Program - Gaucher Disease
Senate Finance Committee
February 20, 2026
Support

Background: SB495 would require the Maryland Department of Health, as part of the newborn screening system, to screen for Gaucher disease. While Gaucher disease affects people of all ethnic backgrounds, it is especially common in the Ashkenazi Jewish population. ¹

Written Comments: The Baltimore Jewish Council (BJC) represents The Associated: Jewish Federation of Baltimore and all its agencies, and programs, as well as the organized Jewish Community of Baltimore.

Maryland's newborn screening program under the Department of Health tests for over 60 different disorders, including metabolic, endocrine, and hemoglobin conditions². A two-screen process is used, with samples collected shortly after birth and again around 10–14 days of age. The screening focuses on identifying rare, serious diseases early to allow for immediate treatment.

Gaucher disease is a genetic disorder more prevalent in people of Ashkenazi Jewish (Eastern European Jewish) descent, with about 1 in 10 carriers in this population, compared to 1 in 450 births affected, making it the most common Jewish genetic disease. It's caused by a deficiency in the [GBA enzyme](#), leading to fat buildup in organs, but carrier screening is vital for this community due to the high carrier rate.

An enzyme test called a beta-glucosidase leukocyte (BGL) test is the main tool that physicians use to diagnose Gaucher disease. This is because all patients with Gaucher disease will have low enzyme activity levels.³ This is a simple test that can be added to the already administered blood panel required by the Department of Health for newborns.

For these reasons, we ask for a favorable report on SB495.

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.

¹ <https://www.gaucherdisease.org/about-gaucher-disease/jewish-genetic-diseases/>

² [Pages - NBS Disorders](#)

³ <https://www.gaucherdisease.org/gaucher-diagnosis-treatment/testing/>