



Testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill 786 – Department of Human Services, Maryland Department of Health, and Department of Education – Easing Access to Family Support Programs
Appropriations Committee
February 10, 2021

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 and synagogues 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 tirelessly throughout the entire Greater Washington area to advocate for our agencies that serve the most vulnerable residents, support our Jewish day schools and community centers, and to campaign for important policy interests on behalf of the entire Jewish community.

The JCRC has a long tradition of being on the forefront of efforts to reduce economic poverty in the United States. The Jewish concept of “Tikkun Olam” (repair the world) requires Jews to work for the welfare of all persons. Moreover, Judaism embodies a sense of ethical responsibility to everybody in our nation to assure them the basic necessities of life and to use our efforts to provide all people with the ability to maintain their economic well-being and dignity. As Proverbs 31:9 says, “speak up, judge righteously, champion the poor and the needy.”

House Bill 786 establishes that it is the policy of the State to do everything possible to alleviate administrative hurdles for low-income families seeking access to support programs; requiring that the Department of Human Services, the Maryland Department of Health, and the State Department of Education to take certain steps to achieve the policy goal and to simplify the application process for family support programs. Specifically, the Bill states that by July 2, 2022, DHS, MDH and MSDE shall work together to simplify the application processes for public assistance programs, the MD Medical Assistance Program (Medicaid), MD Children’s Health Program, subsidized and free feeding programs, childcare programs and any other similar programs. This simplification process includes: simplify application language, reduce the number of application questions to the fewest necessary to determine qualifications, and improve access to applications through prominent placement on departmental websites. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on House Bill 786.