



**Testimony in SUPPORT of:
Bill #33-23 – Voluntary Registry for Emergency 911 Calls - Established
September 12, 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 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. To that end, we have a history of advocating for our nonprofit partners which serve, on a nonsectarian basis, the most vulnerable populations among us.

The JCRC supports Bill 33-23, which would create a voluntary 911 registry, allowing residents or their caregivers to self-identify traits that could help emergency response officers when responding to emergencies. These traits can include disabilities and health challenges such as being non-verbal, sensitive to loud noises or bright lights, and prone to avoid eye contact. This Bill was inspired by legislation in the Maryland General Assembly which the JCRC also supported through written testimony.

For decades, the JCRC has been committed to prioritizing the needs and rights of people with special needs. Our agency is committed to advancing and supporting policy measures to empower individuals with disabilities to achieve maximum independence and to break down barriers to opportunity and inclusion. Bill 33-23 is critical to fulfilling the JCRC's above stated priorities. It should also be noted that the value of this registry is limited unless coupled with quality practical training for first responders. In short, first responders must have the skills to appropriately respond to the special needs of the individuals this legislation seeks to protect. With this understanding in mind, we strongly support Bill 33-23.