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## Written Testimony

### House Bill 898 – Maryland Department of Emergency Management - Office of Domestic Terrorism Response Appropriations Committee - March 10, 2022

## Support

**Background:** House Bill 898 (HB898) would establish the Office of Domestic Terrorism Response within the Maryland Department of Emergency Management for the purpose of developing strategies and resources to prepare for, prevent, and recover from domestic terrorism activities. The bill would require the office to coordinate with federal, state, and local agencies, consult with the academic community, and work with public health professionals. The office would be asked to do such things as seek out grant opportunities for the state, identify trends in domestic terrorism, and collect and implement best practices. An annual report on the office's activities would be required to be made to the General Assembly.

**Written Comments:** Antisemitism and hate in our communities, in our state, and in our nation represent a grave threat to Jewish communities and all minority communities of the United States. The news has been filled with reports of attacks – and thwarted attacks – on faith institutions and other targets. While our law enforcement agencies have been focused on domestic terrorism, the surge in extremist hate means that more needs to be done.

The Baltimore Jewish Council was proud to serve as a representative last fall on the Maryland Domestic Terrorism Task Force that was assembled at the direction of the Maryland General Assembly. HB898 would formalize a crucial recommendation of that task force – the creation of a coordinating group to align current efforts, examine best practices, seek out new sources of grant funding, and help to increase coordination among law enforcement, government agencies, and non-government actors.

The task force's fall meeting included reports of tremendous work already being done in Maryland. But the task force representatives concluded the meeting with a desire to keep working together and to continue to collectively explore strategies and efforts for Maryland. Formalizing the creation of a domestic terrorism office within the Department of Emergency Management would create a clear structure to ensure the work moves forward in a thoughtful, organized way.

To help protect our communities against the growing threat of violent domestic terrorism, the Baltimore Jewish Council asks for a favorable report on HB898.

*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 Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.*

BALTIMORE JEWISH COUNCIL

5750 Park Heights Avenue, Suite 329 • Baltimore, Maryland 21215

410-542-4850 • fax 410-542-4834 • baltjc.org

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