



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

February 27, 2020

SB 76

Legal Holiday – Maryland Emancipation Day – Establishment

Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee

SUPPORT

The Maryland Catholic Conference represents the mutual public policy interests of the three (arch)dioceses serving the state of Maryland, including the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Archdiocese of Washington, and the Diocese of Wilmington. We offer this testimony in support of Senate Bill 76, which would establish Maryland Emancipation Day as a State legal holiday, a public school holiday, a bank holiday, and a State employee holiday.

Maryland abolished slavery on November 1, 1864, more than a year before the rest of the nation. Elevating this historic and significant event to a State legal holiday will give Marylanders the opportunity to acknowledge and honor a major milestone in our State's history. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops have reminded us in their recent pastoral letter on racism, *Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love Again*, that "*The evil of racism festers in part because, as a nation, there has been very limited formal acknowledgement of the harm done to so many, no moment of atonement, no national process of reconciliation and, all too often a neglect of our history. Many of our institutions still harbor, and too many of our laws still sanction, practices that deny justice and equal access to certain groups of people. God demands more from us.*"

Having Emancipation Day recognized as a State legal holiday creates opportunities for events to happen throughout the State to help educate Marylanders on the significance of Emancipation while at the same time providing an environment for remembrance and healing.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 76.

