



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

February 17, 2022

HB 513

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program – Established

House Ways & Means Committee

Position: Support

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill 513. The Conference represents the public policy interests of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, the Archdioceses of Baltimore and Washington and the Diocese of Wilmington, which together encompass over one million Marylanders.

House Bill 513 would establish the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program within the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). The program would enroll children and families in need of intensive mental or behavioral health services in appropriate clinics or programs, seeking to promote their behavioral and mental health wellness. The program would also provide behavioral and mental health wellness training, coaching and mentoring to teachers and other caregivers in addressing behavioral challenges. Lastly the program would promote community-resource partnerships and ensure access to stable high quality child care.

Children are the core of the family unit and any legislation that seeks to stabilize their child care environment should be considered a priority. Stable child care is an essential component to supporting strong, economically secure families. Moreover, enabling working parents' continued access to child care services is an imperative part of combating poverty. Often, a barrier to sustainable and full-time employment is the availability and affordability of reliable child care services. The State should thus do all it can to support access to child care services for working parents.

Additionally, this is a very challenging time for the mental health of so many in our state and society. To the extent that this legislation seeks to connect those who need it with mental health services, the Conference lends its support. It is for these reasons the we request a favorable report on House Bill 513.