



Senate Bill 551
Education – Service Year Option Program – Establishment
(Serving Every Region Through Vocational Exploration Act of 2023)

Budget & Taxation Committee

February 22, 2023

Support

Catholic Charities of Baltimore supports Senate Bill 551 which would create a service year option for recent high school graduates.

Inspired by the Gospel to love, serve and teach, Catholic Charities provides care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. For 100 years, Catholic Charities has accompanied Marylanders as they age with dignity, obtain empowering careers, heal from trauma and addiction, achieve economic independence, prepare for educational success and feel welcome as immigrant neighbors. We recognize the importance of exposing young adults to public interest careers.

Year of service opportunities provide job training and experience that is often used as a jumping off point – participants could go on to be hired by the agency they served with or to continue working in that field. Even for those that go into other fields after their year of service, they often learn skills that translate into other job settings.

Employers also benefit from a well-structured service year program. The young, fresh employees bring a new level of energy to the work improving the work environment all around. This new pool of workers will also help to address the workforce crisis that we are facing – especially in the healthcare fields.

A service year is often personally transformative for individuals creating a more empathetic society. Even if the participant chooses not to continue in public service or to work in other fields that seem unrelated, like private business, they are bringing a level of empathy and civic-mindedness that they gain from their service experience.

We are excited about the prospect of a service year program and look forward to working with the Administration to shape a program that benefits the individual participants, meets the growing needs of Maryland's non-profit employers and creates a more civic-minded populous.

For the reasons listed above, Catholic Charities of Baltimore appreciates your consideration, and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for SB 551.

Submitted By: Regan Vaughan, Director Advocacy