



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 14th, 2023

SB 257

**Task Force to Assess the Viability for Free Phone Calls for State Incarcerated Individuals
(Keeping Families Connected Act of 2023)**

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Position: Favorable

The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Senate Bill 257 establishes the Task Force to Assess the Viability for Free Phone Calls for State Incarcerated Individuals. The task force must (1) analyze data related to free prison phone call programs in other states; (2) evaluate the projected program cost to the State of Maryland; and (3) evaluate and make recommendations to allow for phone calls to be made free of charge by individuals confined in State correctional facilities while minimizing financial cost to the State

The Conference supports reforms to the criminal justice system to promote the common good, help restore a sense of community, promote rehabilitation and resist the violence that too often engulfs much of our culture. In their 2000 pastoral statement, *Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice*, the Bishops stated, "We call upon government to redirect the vast number of public resources away from building more and more prisons and toward better and more effective programs aimed at crime prevention, rehabilitation, education efforts, substance abuse treatment, and programs of probation, parole and reintegration."

The Conference appreciates your consideration and respectfully urges a **favorable** report for Senate Bill 257.