



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 29, 2024

HB 352

Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act of 2024

(Joseph A. Sellinger Formula for Aid to Non-Public Institutions of Higher Education)

House Appropriations Committee

Position: UNFAVORABLE

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in OPPOSITION to the significant reduction of the Sellinger Formula for independent colleges and universities proposed in the Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act, House Bill 352. 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. We also offer this testimony on behalf of the families of more than 50,000 students served by over 150 PreK-12 Catholic schools in Maryland, many of whom go on to attend the independent colleges and universities subject to the proposed cut.

The thirteen Maryland independent colleges and universities that share in the Sellinger Formula have acted as an important complement to our state's public institutions of higher education, helping to propel Maryland as one of the preeminently educated states in the nation. Since 1970, the Sellinger formula has aided these institutions in that mission and it is absolutely imperative that we continue to support these institutions as a state. They not only help to educate the next generation of Maryland leaders, but act as an important economic incubator for our state. Particularly at a time when Maryland's economy has grown stagnant, these colleges and universities are key to economic incubation and should not have their funding drastically reduced as proposed in this year's Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act (HB 352).

More specifically, the Catholic institutions of higher education at Mount St. Mary's University, Notre Dame of Maryland University and Loyola College are an important part of the rich historical tradition of Catholic higher education in Maryland. These institutions provide access to a quality education, which ultimately leads to gainful employment, thus breaking the cycle of poverty plaguing many low-income communities. Pope Francis has stated that the Church should highly value education, leading to gainful employment, as it is through the same that "human beings express and enhance the dignity of their lives." (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 192). Thus, we urge this committee to reject any cuts or alterations to the Sellinger Formula and restore vital funding to these institutions.