



March 27, 2024

**HB 1386
Education - School Employee Antibias Training - Requirements**

Senate Education, Energy & the Environment Committee

Position: INFORMATION

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this informational testimony for House Bill 1386. 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.

House Bill 1386 would require the State Department of Education to develop anti-bias training for employees. The bill, as amended encourages nonpublic schools to develop such training.

The Conference appreciates the end goal of this legislation. Teaching about the horrors and historical atrocities of the Holocaust and racism is indubitably important. However, what makes nonpublic schools unique is their instructional autonomy, which includes their teachers. Catholic schools teach units on racism and the Holocaust in their own dedicated way. Accordingly, we respectfully request that the state not dictate their particular curriculum or employee training on these matters as independent schools.

While an unintended consequence, this bill may do a disservice to both teachers and students and the important subject matter that this bill intends to promote. If nonpublic schools have a stronger or more robust curriculum or employee training on the subject matter of this bill, including but not limited to supplemental projects and the like, the state's dictation of curriculum may weaken that. At best, an amendment allowing nonpublic schools flexibility through substantial equivalency with the state guidelines would be a second option. For example, should the state dictate to a Jewish day school what they should teach about the Holocaust to employees?

Nonpublic schools are approved and/or licensed by the State Department of Education and meet all institutional requirements placed on them by law. However, Maryland law regards nonpublic school curriculum as independent of that of our public schools for numerous reasons and this bill mandates particular curriculum on certain nonpublic schools. As most nonpublic schools do already teach about the holocaust in their own way, oftentimes even more comprehensively, we ask that they continue to be given the autonomy to do so.