



**April 2, 2024**

**SB 1188**

**Maryland Protecting Opportunities and Regional Trade (PORT) Act**

**Senate Finance Committee**

**Senate Budget & Taxation Committee**

**Position: FAVORABLE**

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) offers this testimony in support of Senate Bill 1188. 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 1188, the PORT Act, would establish temporary relief programs to assist individuals and entities impacted by the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge and the closure of the Port of Baltimore. The bill authorizes the Governor to transfer funds from the Revenue Stabilization Account to fund these temporary relief programs.

The collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge has had devastating consequences for our community, especially for those whose livelihoods depend on the operation of the Port of Baltimore. As Catholics we are called to stand in solidarity with our neighbors in times of crisis and to offer support and assistance to those most in need. SB 1188 demonstrates a commitment to fulfilling these urgent needs by providing much-needed relief to individuals and entities affected by this devastating event.

The establishment of temporary relief programs by the Maryland Department of Labor and the Department of Commerce is a commendable step towards alleviating the financial burdens faced by workers, businesses, surviving family members of those whose lives were lost, and communities that have been adversely affected by the bridge collapse and port closure.

SB 1188 represents a tangible expression of upholding the dignity of every human person and the promotion of the common good by providing compassionate assistance to the people and entities impacted by the closure of the Port and the collapse of the bridge. The MCC urges support of this vital legislation that seeks to prioritize the well-being and welfare of our community members who are facing hardship because of this tragic event. Thus, we request a favorable report on Senate Bill 1188.

