



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

February 4, 2020

SB 267

AP Opportunities Act of 2020

Senate Education, Health, & Environmental Affairs Committee

Position: Support

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 267. The Catholic Conference represents the public policy interests of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, including the Archdioceses of Baltimore and Washington and the Diocese of Wilmington, which together encompass over one million Marylanders.

Senate Bill 267 would assist students who are FARMs-eligible, homeless, in foster care or eligible for other need-based assistance with the cost of Advance Placement (AP) examinations. Students must be enrolled in an approved AP course and plan to take the examination associated with that course. This bill would assist low-income students enrolled in AP courses in both public and nonpublic schools.

It is well-settled that education is the best tool for breaking the cycle of poverty and the Church therefore supports efforts to assist low-income students, who are often among the most marginalized in terms of access to quality education. Our state should do all that it can to promote successful educational outcomes for children who might otherwise be deprived of the same opportunities as their wealthier counterparts. Access to a quality education 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).

Advanced Placement courses are a gateway to higher education beyond the high school level. The access promulgated by this bill could open doors for marginalized students through a head start on higher education. Particularly at our Catholic high schools where the FARMs-eligible student enrollments are upwards of 75%, this bill would be a welcome step in increasing access to Advanced Placement course enrollment. It is for these reasons that we respectfully urge a favorable report for Senate Bill 267.