



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

**February 4, 2020**

**HB 231  
Housing Opportunities Made Equal Act**

**House Environment and Transportation Committee**

**Position: Support**

The Maryland Catholic Conference (“Conference”) represents the public-policy interests of the three Roman Catholic (arch)dioceses serving Maryland: the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Archdiocese of Washington, and the Diocese of Wilmington.

HB 231 is an effort to deconcentrate poverty by providing additional opportunities for tenants utilizing public subsidies to live in neighborhoods other than the neighborhoods in which those individuals are currently and disproportionately residing. The bill expands the housing policy of the State by prohibiting discrimination based on a person's source of income.

Families and individuals affected by source of income discrimination are more than numbers or points on a graph –they are real people who are faced with a lack of access to affordable and accessible housing. People worry greatly about how to pay utility, clothing, and food bills when a substantial majority of their income goes toward rent.

The Conference strongly supports legislation that ensures fairness, greater economic opportunity, and increased housing choice for seniors, working families, persons with disabilities, veterans, and all who may struggle with housing instability. In their 1975 pastoral statement, *The Right to a Decent Home*, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) asserted that, “The protection of the human dignity of every person and the right to a decent home require both individual action and structural policies and practices.”

The Church holds that one of government’s primary responsibilities is to ensure that the most basic needs of its people are met. While an individual or a family may be successful in accessing housing assistance through a federal or state program, a frequent hurdle is finding housing where a landlord accepts one’s valid source of income –whether it comes from cash assistance, child support, alimony, or a voucher. Individuals and families having the lawful means to rent or buy housing should not be denied that housing based on where those means come from.

The Conference appreciates your consideration and urges your favorable support of HB 231.