



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

January 30, 2020

SB 70

**Correctional Institutions – Correctional Education Council – Mandatory
Education Program Requirements**

Senate Finance Committee

Position: Support

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 70. 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 70 would require that inmates in state correctional facilities are provided the lesser of a total of 240 hours of educational program or the number of hours it takes them to obtain a GED. Current law requires the state’s Correctional Education Council to develop educational and workforce training programs for adult inmates. The Council is also responsible for regulations for mandatory education programming or mandatory workforce skills training program for inmates. Current law requires a minimum of 120 calendar days of educational programming for inmates who have at least 18 months or more left to serve and who do not yet possess a high school diploma or GED. Thus, this bill would double the requisite education programming for those inmates.

In its pastoral statement “Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice” (USCCB, 2000), the United States conference of Catholic Bishops cited the “absence of educational opportunities” among considerations “contributing to a high rate of recidivism”. The USCCB also cited “education” as one of the key “necessities that enable inmates to live in dignity”.

The Church maintains that systems of justice, including incarceration, should be centered around *restorative* justice. In doing so, systems of justice provide for second chances, providing hope for those who are incarcerated. Education is a means to a fruitful and productive life upon release and is a preventative measure against post-release poverty and/or recidivism. For these important reasons, we urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 70.