



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

**February 27, 2020**

**SB 742**

**Labor and Employment – Fair Recruitment and Transparency Act**

**Senate Finance 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.

Senate Bill 742 expands the current farm labor contracting state statute to H-2B visa holders and foreign labor contractors. It also calls for a task force to study J-1 visa holders and employers and the economic impact of the program throughout the state.

The Catholic Church strongly opposes human trafficking because it disregards the dignity of human life. Although anti-human trafficking efforts often focus on sex trafficking, the Church reminds us to turn our attention to labor trafficking that is very prevalent in the United States as well. The Church is also a strong advocate for immigrants and the needs and rights of workers.

Many people come to Maryland through visa programs that allow them to work here for certain amounts of time and they do not deserve to be exploited in that process. Sadly, it is far too common for the terms of employment to be misrepresented and/or for contractors to charge exorbitant fees that put workers in debt bondage and other situations that can reach to the severity of labor trafficking. Expanding the state licensing requirement to also apply to H-2B visa holders and foreign labor contractors gives the State greater ability to determine which foreign labor contractors can operate in the State, ensures that workers receive truthful contracts, prohibits contractors from charging workers any fees for their services, and promotes transparency for businesses, workers, and the State by establishing a public registry of all licensed contractors. This legislation is a recognition of the need for regulation in the foreign labor recruitment process to prevent such exploitation.

Pope Francis said, “Human trafficking is a crime against humanity. We must unite our efforts to free the victims and stop this increasingly aggressive crime which threatens not only individuals but the basic values of society and of international security and justice.” Let us unite in our efforts to prevent labor trafficking in Maryland.

The Conference appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 742.