



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

February 26, 2020

**House Bill 1008
Education – Child Abuse and Sexual Misconduct Prevention – Hiring Emergent Employees**

House Ways and Means Committee

SUPPORT w/ Amendments

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill 1008, with two amendments. We offer this testimony on behalf of the families of approximately 50,000 students served by more than 150 PreK-12 Catholic schools in Maryland. The Conference represents the public policy interests of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, the Archdioceses of Baltimore and Washington and the Diocese of Wilmington, which together encompass over one million Marylanders.

House Bill 1008 offers some commonsense amendments to a law passed last year, and supported by the Conference, requiring new background check procedures for hiring in all Maryland schools. The bill established a process for public and nonpublic schools to determine whether prospective employees who have direct contact with minors have ever been disciplined for allegations of child sexual abuse or sexual misconduct. The bill also required additional screening by establishing a process for MSDE to consult a teacher certification database upon a school's request.

Last year, Catholic schools, which already observe stringent child protection measures beyond what was previously required by the State, immediately implemented a system for compliance with the new law. Our institutions already conduct mandatory criminal background checks on all employees and on volunteers who work with children, provide comprehensive awareness training to educate adults and children on how to recognize predatory behaviors, and promptly report all suspected incidents of child sexual abuse. Our schools embraced the new requirements as yet another added layer of protection for our students.

While background checks under the 2019 law are pending, the provisions of House Bill 1008, if enacted, would provide classroom continuity for "emergent hires". Thus, we think this bill is a great means toward those ends.

The Conference offers two simple amendments, with explanations. These amendments would remove nonpublic schools from a provision that really need only apply to public schools because of the nature of their contracts and collective bargaining. Some non-teacher personnel at nonpublic schools are not contractual employees and teachers are governed by their own contractual provisions outside of collective bargaining agreements. Additionally, the amendments would prevent emergent hires from being alone with students, but still ensure that they could teach in front of full class while in the vicinity of another permanent employee.

We respectfully request a favorable report on House Bill 1008, with the attached amendments.



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

Proposed Amendments to HB 1008

Education – Child Abuse and Sexual Misconduct Prevention – Hiring Emergent Employees

AMENDMENT No. 1

On page 5, line 1, strike “~~OR NONPUBLIC SCHOOL~~”.

Explanation: While it makes sense for all schools, including nonpublic schools, to be included in the first provision of this bill (Section (E)(1)), Section (E)(2) need only apply to public schools because of the nature of their contracts and collective bargaining. Some non-teacher personnel at nonpublic schools are not contractual employees and teachers are governed by their own contractual provisions outside of collective bargaining agreements.

AMENDMENT No. 1

On page 4, line 31, strike “~~ALONE~~” and insert “ON A ONE-TO-ONE BASIS”.

Explanation: Teachers hired on an emergent hiring basis should be able to teach before a full class of students, so long as they are in the immediate vicinity of a permanent employee, without being required to have a teachers aid, for example, in the classroom. Many schools do not have the resources to provide for that aspect.