**February 10, 2021**

**SB 478**
**Correctional Services – Immigration Detention – Prohibition (Dignity Not Detention Act)**

**Senate Judicial Proceedings 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 478 prohibits state and local governments from entering into agreements facilitating immigration-related detention in private facilities, including the housing of those being held for deportation proceedings or removal. It also requires that existing contracts be terminated by October 1, 2022.

The Catholic Church has historically held a strong interest in immigration and how public policy affects immigrants seeking a new life in the United States, stemming from the inherent dignity and value that each person holds, regardless of societal labels such as citizenship status, ethnicity, or financial ability. In this vein, the Conference strongly supports legislation that protects immigrants and their families, especially when they are faced with the prospect of their families being broken apart. The Church recognizes that a strong and thriving family unit is the basis of a fulfilling life.

In the absence of federal immigration policy reform, the state must act to not only differentiate the roles of federal civil immigration officials and local law enforcement and corrections officers, but also to protect its most vulnerable persons and families from unjust and inhumane detention practices. Senate Bill 478 is a crucial first step for Maryland to take a strong stance in favor of the basic human rights and decency of each individual in the state.

The Conference appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 478.