



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

February 18, 2021

SB 913

Human Services – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – Heat and Eat Program

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 913 establishes the Heat and Eat Program within the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in the Department of Human Services; providing that the purpose of the Program is to expand food access to households that are receiving or eligible for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits; requiring the Department to make a certain determination for a household to receive certain benefits; and requiring the Department to adopt certain regulations.

The Church strongly supports the continuation of anti-poverty programs that address the basic needs of its poorest individuals and families, including those tackling food insecurity, affordable housing, and unemployment. In his address on the Second World Day of the Poor, Pope Francis clearly illustrated this importance in stating how *“we are called to honour the poor and to give them precedence, out of the conviction that they are a true presence of Jesus in our midst. ‘As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.’ (Mt. 25:40).”*

In Maryland, the Conference frequently advocates for the protection of social safety net programs to promote the common good. Household and familial insecurity stemming from the instability and fluctuation of federal assistance programs is detrimental to a healthy society. When there is doubt as to where a next meal will come from, it is extremely difficult to focus on other areas that make a person complete, going against the Church’s inherent belief that every life has dignity. Where one unit of government is failing its most vulnerable members, another must step in to act. Maryland may soon find itself in this situation, and Senate Bill 913 would serve as a means to provide continuing stability and dignity for those who cannot financially withstand losing such an important benefit as food assistance.

The Conference appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 913.