



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

March 9, 2021

**Senate Bill 668
Good Job Opportunities for High School Graduates Act of 2021**

Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee

SUPPORT

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 668. 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.

Senate Bill 668 will promote awareness and access vocational certificates, industry certifications and apprenticeship programs through information sharing directly to students. In the same manner as access to postsecondary education is promoted, the bill requires a similar emphasis on vocational training.

Particularly with the rising costs of postsecondary education acting as a significant barrier for college access for low-income students, it is important that Maryland offer and promote a wide variety of options beyond traditional educational confines. Vocational, trade and apprenticeship programs are integral components in job training in important sectors of our economy. Student awareness of these options is imperative and could result in significant economic opportunities for those students.

The Church emphasizes special attention toward advancing opportunities for those who might be marginalized in having less educational opportunity than others. States should do all that they can to level the playing fields across income levels with regard to access to education. The Conference supports legislation, such as Senate Bill 668, that promotes access to “education, access to health care, and above all employment, for it is through free, creative, participatory and mutually supportive labor that human beings express and enhance the dignity of their lives.” (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 192). It is through education that citizens find a pathway toward economic security and the dignity of work.

Senate Bill 668 will assist in providing both knowledge and skill, with an aim toward eventually gainful employment, to youth who might otherwise face serious obstacles to obtaining those things. It is for these reasons that we urge a favorable report for Senate Bill 668.