



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

**February 09, 2021**

**SB 365**

**Neighborhood Business Development Program - Food Desert Projects - Business Retention**

**Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs**

**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 365 expands the purpose of the Neighborhood Business Development Program to include retaining certain businesses and enterprises in food deserts and certain areas that serve food deserts; increasing to \$100,000 the maximum amount of a certain small loan that may be provided to an approved entity for assistance in providing or maintaining access to healthy food in certain food deserts.

U.S. bishops reiterated that a primary goal of food and agricultural policy should be providing basic food and nutrition for all. In *Food Policy in a Hungry World*, the bishops called for strengthening the domestic food assistance programs to ensure that no one in America goes hungry or suffers malnutrition. *"When the economy fails to provide the jobs and income necessary to prevent hunger and malnutrition, the various local, state, and national food assistance programs must be funded and expanded to provide food to all in need"*. Thus, Senate bill 365 seeks to promote the basic right to enough food to sustain a life with dignity. The poverty and hunger that diminish the lives of millions in our own land and in so many other countries are fundamental threats to human life and dignity and demand a strong policy response.

For this reason the Conference appreciates your consideration and urges a favorable report for Senate Bill 365.