



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

**January 26, 2021**

**Senate Bill 210**

**COVID-19 Claim – Civil Immunity**

**Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**Position: SUPPORT**

The Maryland Catholic Conference represents the mutual public-policy interests of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, including the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Archdiocese of Washington, and the Diocese of Wilmington. We offer this testimony in support of Senate Bill 210.

Senate Bill 210 would provide immunity from civil liability for a COVID-19 claim to a “person”, which includes, but is not limited to 501(c)(3) organizations and schools, who acts in compliance with certain statues, rules, regulations, executive orders, and agency orders, unless the person acted with gross negligence or intentional wrongdoing.

During this pandemic so many entities have stepped up and developed innovative ways to permit them to continue to provide critical services, supplies and education and have done so in a way that is safe and protects those they are serving. Catholic parishes, schools and charities have gone above and beyond to provide for the needs of so many in the communities they serve.

This pandemic is an unprecedented situation and despite the best efforts of entities to comply with public health guidance and executive orders many entities are concerned that they will be forced to defend themselves from what could be frivolous lawsuits that, while perhaps ultimately unsuccessful, would be prohibitively costly to defend.

Senate Bill 210 is an important measure to help ensure that “persons”, as defined in this legislation, can continue to fight the pandemic while also keeping people safe.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 210.