



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

**March 3, 2021**

**HB 304**

**State and Local Government – Participation in Federal Immigration Enforcement**

**House Judiciary 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.

House Bill 304 clarifies the roles of federal civil immigration authorities and local law enforcement officials in the state, specifically related to notification procedures to federal agencies, such as ICE, without a federal judicial warrant.

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. In the absence of federal immigration policy reform, there has to be greater clarity in the roles of local, state, and federal law enforcement in immigration enforcement and detainment. Unfortunately, when local and state law enforcement are requested to take part in immigration enforcement, it causes an erosion of their critical relationship with immigrant communities. When immigrant communities do not feel comfortable interacting with police – even to report crimes, then whole communities are less safe as crimes go unreported and/or unsolved. House Bill 304 balances the needs for both public safety and immigration enforcement in order to make families and communities safer. It will rebuild the necessary trust between law enforcement and immigrants throughout Maryland.

The Conference strongly supports legislation that protects immigrants and their families. A person and their family shouldn’t have to live in fear from the very entities who are tasked with keeping every person safe and healthy and helping our communities thrive. This fear is palpable and it permeates all aspects of a person’s life, such as running errands, driving children to and from school or activities, attending religious services, and going to work. Living in such fear has chilling effects on one’s well-being in terms of stability and ability to contribute positively to their family and community.

The Conference appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 304.