



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

**January 21, 2021**

**SB 166  
Criminal Procedure – Police Officers – Duty to Report Misconduct**

**Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**Position: Support**

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in SUPPORT of legislative proposal Senate Bill 166. The Conference represents the public policy interests of the three (arch) dioceses serving Maryland, including the Archdioceses of Baltimore and Washington and the Diocese of Wilmington, which together encompass over one million Maryland Catholics.

Senate Bill 166 would require a police officer to report the conduct of another police officer to a supervisor or agency chief when the officer has actual knowledge of a number of malfeasances, including but not limited to homicide, use of excessive force, sex crimes, or other acts of mistrust such as theft, perjury, fraud or tampering with evidence.

The Conference supports Senate Bill 166 as a means for meaningful reform in combating police misconduct and restoring community trust in policing. In the June, 2020, the Bishops of Maryland wrote a letter on racial justice *Building Bridges of Understanding and Hope*, which stated that the “unjust killing of George Floyd and other Black Americans, and the subsequent protests, rallies and vigils that continue to take place make it clear that the conscience of our nation is on trial as questions of race and equality confront each and every one of us.” One of the most pressing questions relative to racial injustice and police reforms is how to address the underlying issue of police mistrust, particularly in the African-American and other minority communities.

Senate Bill 166 is a simple, effective way of addressing threats of police misconduct and helping to restore citizens’ trust in police. It not only seeks to deter officer misconduct but ensures that fellow officers who have knowledge of that misconduct alert their superiors. Police officers are public employees and their actions should be subject to reasonable accountability measures.

The Maryland General Assembly frequently considers and passes new laws regarding public accountability and this measure is a commonsense step in the right direction. It is for these reasons that the Conference seeks a favorable report on Senate Bill 166.