



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

January 14, 2021

**Senate Bill 109
Secretary of State - Address Confidentiality Programs - Merger of Programs and
Expanded Participant Eligibility**

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Position: SUPPORT

The Maryland Catholic 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, which together encompass over one million Marylanders.

Senate Bill 109 streamlines the administration of the Address Confidentiality Program for victims of domestic violence and human trafficking. It would ensure the Secretary of State can administer the program to survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking, allow individuals and organizations serving survivors to recommend them for the program, accept a statement from survivors of their subjective fear as an option for proving eligibility, and expand eligibility to include survivors of sexual assault, stalking, and harassment who would benefit from shielding their real property records.

The program is one that the Maryland Catholic Conference often promotes through parish-based education and outreach initiatives as a way to help victims of domestic violence and human trafficking to prevent their perpetrators from obtaining their address.

The Conference supported SB 524 in 2018 which established the deed shielding procedure and welcomes the expansion of this bill to protect even more survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking. Survivors deserve to feel safe and secure in their own homes as they rebuild their lives. Pope Francis has urged us to restore dignity to “those who are wounded, violated and exposed to every form of exploitation, enslavement, violence and abuse,” and to uproot these evils.

It is for these reasons that the Maryland Catholic Conference respectfully urges a favorable report for **SB 109**. Thank you for your consideration.