

Senate Bill 218
Income Tax – Child Tax Credit and Expansion of the Earned Income Credit

Ways and Means Committee
February 23, 2021

Favorable

Catholic Charities of Baltimore strongly supports SB 218, which would create a refundable credit for children who are under the age of 17 living with a disability and would expand the state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to tax filers who use Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers (ITIN).

Inspired by the gospel mandates to love, serve and teach, Catholic Charities provides care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. As the largest human service provider in Maryland working with tens of thousands of youth, individuals, and families each year, we recognize the inherent dignity within all - including our immigrant neighbors.

Each day, Catholic Charities staff interact with Marylanders facing challenges and difficulties, those challenges and difficulties have only escalated during the Pandemic. COVID-19 has laid to bare longstanding inequities in our systems, including inequitable access to our social safety-net.

Since 1963, immigrants from all over the world have trusted the Esperanza Center, a Catholic Charities program, to help them navigate life in a new country. Through this work, we have witnessed the enormous contribution immigrant families make to our communities. Immigrant workers cultivate and harvest the food we eat, they construct the buildings we live in, they serve as domestic workers, and they offer their hospitality in restaurants and hotels. They are our neighbors and our friends. They are also taxpayers. Yet, when the pandemic struck they were left behind by our government. They didn't qualify for unemployment. They were not sent stimulus payments. Often, their occupations did not permit remote working. They either risked their health to continue working or risked the economic security of their families by following advice to stay home.

Catholic Charities responded by adjusting our services and standing up two hotlines – one a bilingual hotline to assist Marylanders in accessing public benefits and the other to offer health advice and resources to non-English speakers. Through both hotlines we heard the heartbreaking stories of immigrant families trying to remain healthy while still trying to provide for their children. While we could refer callers to information about COVID-19 and to schedule testing, there was very little we could offer in terms of economic relief from the pandemic.

This bill recognizes the contribution of immigrants to the fabric of our society – it extends to them the benefits we extend to all tax payers. SB 218 allows ITIN holders to access the most effective anti-poverty program that we offer as a State. Allowing our immigrant neighbors to obtain the Earned Income Tax Credit will increase their economic security as they work to rebuild their lives in the wake of the pandemic.

Our entire society suffers when there is economic instability amongst a segment of our neighbors—providing economic relief to the immigrant community will have a stabilizing effect for us all. **On behalf of the individuals and families we work with, Catholic Charities of Baltimore appreciates your consideration of our views, and urges the committee to issue a favorable report for SB 218.**

Submitted By: Regan K. Vaughan, Director of Advocacy