



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

February 22, 2021

HB 944

Growing Family Child Care Opportunities Pilot Program – Established

House Ways & Means Committee

Position: Support

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill 944. The Conference represents the public policy interests of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, the Archdioceses of Baltimore and Washington and the Diocese of Wilmington, which together encompass over one million Marylanders.

House Bill 944 would establish a Growing Family Child Care Opportunities Pilot Program in the Department of Education. Through this bill, MSDE would be afforded the ability to provide grants to local jurisdictions or child care licensing regions to increase the supply and ensure the sustainability of family child care providers in areas with higher numbers of low-income Marylanders.

These grants would provide much needed support to a promote growth of a vital and essential sector of Marylander's everyday lives. Sixteen percent of child care providers have been forced to close their doors in Maryland since early 2020, leading to less options for child care access for working families. With the passage of this bill would promote new providers to open their doors, thus providing greater access to child care options in Maryland.

Child Care is an essential component to supporting strong, economically secure families. Additionally, the Church supports this bill as a part of its priority interest in alleviating poverty in our state, as enabling working parents' continued access to child care services is an imperative part of combating poverty. Often, a barrier to sustainable and full-time employment is the availability and affordability of reliable child care services. The State should thus do all it can to support access to child care services for working parents.

The Conference appreciates your consideration, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 944.