



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

February 17, 2022

House Bill 648

Maryland Higher Education Outreach and College Access Program – Funding

House Appropriations Committee

SUPPORT

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill 648. 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 648 would provide meaningful funding for the Education Outreach and College Access Program, made permanent last year from a pilot program created in 2015. Each step in the creation of this program has been supported by the Conference.

The program promotes college access for low-income Maryland high school students. It also increases the participation of Maryland’s non-profit organizations in promoting education among those with financial need.

The Church emphasizes special attention toward advancing opportunities for children who might be marginalized in having less educational opportunity than others. States should do all that they can to level the playing fields across income levels regarding access to education. The Conference supports legislation, such as House Bill 648, that promotes access to “education, access to health care, and above all employment, for it is through free, creative, participatory and mutually supportive labor that human beings express and enhance the dignity of their lives.” (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 192). It is through education that citizens find a pathway toward economic security and the dignity of work. This program is a creative and worthwhile investment in providing those things for future generations.

It is in the best interest for Maryland’s future to ensure that low-income students have access to continue their education and avail themselves to diversified workforce opportunities. Therefore, we urge this Committee to report favorably on House Bill 648.