



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

February 15, 2022

Senate Bill 435

**Family Law – Preventing or Interfering With Report of Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect –
Statute of Limitations**

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Position: SUPPORT

The Maryland Catholic Conference represents the mutual public-policy interests of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, including the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Archdiocese of Washington, and the Diocese of Wilmington. We offer this testimony in support of Senate Bill 435.

Senate Bill 435 would alter the criminal statute of limitations for a violation of the prohibition on preventing or interfering with the making of a certain report of suspected child abuse or neglect. Senate Bill 435 is an important measure for ensuring that mandated reporters take seriously their obligation to report abuse, most especially when they are aware of a clear instance of abuse.

Like many other institutions serving children, all Catholic parishes, diocesan schools and youth programs observe stringent child protection measures. Our institutions conduct mandatory criminal background checks on all employees and on volunteers who work with children, provide comprehensive awareness training to educate adults and children on how to recognize predatory behaviors, and promptly report all suspected incidents of child sexual abuse.

Senate Bill 435 is an important measure to help ensure the immediate reporting of instances of known child abuse, so that children in these situations can quickly receive the protection and services needed to at a minimum remove them from further harm.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 435.