



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

February 08, 2022

**HB 456
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - State Supplement**

House Appropriations Committee

Position: Support

The Maryland Catholic Conference (“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.

House Bill 456 would lower the age from 62 to 60 for the minimum age that a member of a household must be for eligibility for a State-provided supplemental benefit under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; increasing the amount of the supplemental benefit that the State must provide by increasing the minimum total monthly benefit from \$30 to \$45.

The Church strongly supports the continuation of anti-poverty programs that address the basic needs of its poorest individuals and families, including those tackling food insecurity, affordable housing, and unemployment. In his address on the Second World Day of the Poor, Pope Francis clearly illustrated this importance in stating how “*we are called to honour the poor and to give them precedence, out of the conviction that they are a true presence of Jesus in our midst. ‘As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.’ (Mt. 25:40).*”

In Maryland, the Conference frequently advocates for the protection of social safety net programs to promote the common good. Household and familial insecurity stemming from the instability and fluctuation of federal assistance programs is detrimental to a healthy society. When there is doubt as to where a next meal will come from, it is extremely difficult to focus on other areas that make a person complete, going against the Church’s inherent belief that every life has dignity. Where one unit of government is failing its most vulnerable members, another must step in to act. Maryland may soon find itself in this situation, and House Bill 456 would serve as a means to provide continuing stability and dignity for those who cannot financially withstand losing such an important benefit as food assistance.

The Conference appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 456.