



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

January 25, 2022

SB 121

Maryland Farms and Families Fund, Maryland Food and Agricultural Resiliency Mechanism Grant Program, and Maryland Farm-to-School Meal Grant Pilot Program – Alterations and Establishment

Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs 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.

Senate Bill 121 alters the purpose and use of the Maryland Farms and Families Fund; establishing the Maryland Food and Agricultural Resiliency Mechanism Grant Program and Fund; establishing the Maryland Farm-to-School Meal Grant Pilot Program and Fund; and generally relating to the Maryland Farms and Families Fund, the Maryland Food and Agricultural Resiliency Mechanism Grant Program and Fund, and the Maryland Farm-to-School Meal Grant Pilot Program and Fund.

The Church is a strong and steady voice for programs that help alleviate poverty and its effects, stating that “[o]ur commitment to the dignity of every person requires a special concern for those who are poor and vulnerable, whose needs are greatest, and whose lives and dignity are often threatened by hunger, poverty, and suffering.” (*For I Was Hungry and You Gave Me Food*, 2003)

The Conference historically and routinely supports legislation aimed at addressing food insecurity and other such poverty ailments among vulnerable and often marginalized populations in the state. As Pope Francis stresses in his message on World Food Day 2021 “*Our actions are our future. Better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life*”, underlines the need for concerted action to ensure that everyone has access to diets that ensure maximum environmental sustainability, and that are both adequate and affordable. Each of us has a role to play in transforming food systems for the benefit of people and the planet, and “all of us can cooperate [...] for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents” (*Encyclical Laudato Si’*, 14). Thus, Senate Bill 121 seeks to promote the basic right to enough food to sustain a life with dignity. The poverty and hunger that diminish the lives of millions in our own land and in so many other countries are fundamental threats to human life and dignity and demand a strong policy response

The Conference appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 121.