



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

February 24, 2022

**SB 562
Correctional Services – Geriatric and Medical Parole**

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Position: Support

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 562. The Catholic Conference represents the public policy interests of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, including the Archdioceses of Baltimore and Washington and the Diocese of Wilmington, which together encompass over one million Marylanders.

Senate Bill 562 would allow the parole commission to utilize a dynamic risk assessment instrument to determine whether certain inmates who are at least 60 years of age should be released on parole. It also allows for expansion of medical parole. Older inmates who have served much of their sentence merit a parole hearing to see if they are rehabilitated and can re-enter society. In *A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice* (2000), the Catholic Bishops state: "*We believe that both victims and offender are children of God. Despite their very different claims on society, their lives and dignity should be protected and respected. We seek justice, not vengeance. We believe punishment must have clear purposes: protecting society and rehabilitating those who violate the law.*"

The Catholic Church roots much of its social justice teaching in the inherent dignity of every human person and the principals of forgiveness, redemption and restoration. Catholic doctrine provides that the criminal justice system should serve three principal purposes: (1) the preservation and protection of the common good of society, (2) the restoration of public order, and (3) the restoration or conversion of the offender. Thus, the Church recognizes the importance of striking a balance between protecting the common good and attentiveness to the rehabilitation of the incarcerated. The Conference submits that this legislation seeks to embody these principals and purposes, relative to intersection between our justice system and our communities, victims and offenders.

Senate Bill 562 would restore hope for elderly offenders or those in need of certain medical treatment seeking to reincorporate themselves into society, where they can be cared for by the community as opposed to behind bars. This is particularly warranted where they pose no danger to society. The Maryland Catholic Conference thus urges this committee to return a favorable report on Senate Bill 562.