



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

February 01, 2022

HB 25

Rehabilitation and Education for All Prisons (REAP) Act

House Rules and Executive Nominations 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 25 would require the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to set certain goals relating to rehabilitation programs and establish certain tracking systems relating to rehabilitation programs; requiring the State Department of Education and the Department of Human Services to assist the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services in establishing certain tracking systems. Additionally, the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services will assist inmates in accessing certain federal education grants; and generally relating to rehabilitation and education for inmates.

In its pastoral statement *“Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice”* (USCCB, 2000), the United States conference of Catholic Bishops cited the *“absence of educational opportunities”* among considerations *“contributing to a high rate of recidivism”*. The USCCB also cited *“education”* as one of the key *“necessities that enable inmates to live in dignity”*.

Additionally, the Conference firmly supports restorative justice practices. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has stated that *“People must be held accountable for their actions but justice and restoration must be the object of punishment which must have a constructive and reformative purpose”* (*Restorative Justice: Healing and Transformation of Persons, Families and Communities*, USCCB, 2015).

House Bill 25 is a restorative justice measure and the Church maintains that systems of incarceration should always be centered on *restorative* justice. When inmates are incentivized to obtain an education, or further their academic credentials, their chances to break free from their often-challenging circumstances and live productive lives post-release are exponentially enhanced. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on House Bill 25.