



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

February 3, 2022

**House Bill 146
Education – Reportable Offenses and Student Discipline – Alterations**

House Ways and Means Committee

INFORMATION ONLY

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this STATEMENT OF INFORMATION to House Bill 146. We offer this testimony on behalf of the families of approximately 50,000 students served by more than 150 PreK-12 Catholic schools in Maryland. The Conference represents the public policy interests of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, the Archdioceses of Baltimore and Washington and the Diocese of Wilmington, which together encompass over one million Marylanders.

House Bill 146 would change the definition of a “reportable offense” for the purposes of a state’s attorney notification to school administration regarding alleged criminal misconduct by a student. Current law requires that the state’s attorney make these notifications.

The Conference supports efforts to make our system of juvenile justice in Maryland a more restorative in nature. Accordingly, we appreciate the aim of House Bill 146 in attempting to shield youth from both the stigma of a potentially unsubstantiated criminal arrest or charge, as well as the goal of respecting privacy of youth who experience system involvement unrelated to their educational day.

However, when student arrests for current reportable offenses occur, there is often a failure to notify administrators as it stands already, so loosening these provisions would be unwelcome by many school administrators. Moreover, schools are often instead notified of the issue by community hearsay and are left to address concerns without having pertinent or accurate factual information. Adverse events of system involvement do affect the whole child, in every aspect of their day. It is important for both the wellbeing of the student, as well as in limited circumstances the safety of the school community, for administrators to be aware of these issues.

Additionally, alleged victims can often be members of the same school community. Administration would need to be aware of these circumstances for the safety of all involved.

While this bill does have noble roots in restorative justice, we question whether it sufficiently balances the safety and wellbeing of all students in the particular educational setting.