



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

**March 31, 2022**

**SB 706**

**Nonpublic Educational Programs - Children With Disabilities - Costs of Teacher Salaries**

**House Ways & Means Committee**

**Position: SUPPORT**

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 706. 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.

While this bill does not affect any traditional Catholic or other nonpublic schools that are not classified or covered under COMAR as nonpublic special education schools, the Conference offers this supporting testimony in honor of the fantastic work and mission of Maryland's nonpublic special education schools and the students they serve through "nonpublic placement" funding in the Maryland budget.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that students with disabilities are provided with a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). Thus, where public schools cannot fully accommodate a student, they are often placed in a specialized nonpublic special education school. Senate Bill 706 would allow underpaid nonpublic special education teachers to be paid a salary commensurate with their public school counterparts.

Senate Bill 706 intersects with the Church's obligation to care for those with disabilities. The Church calls for the defense of policies "enable the individual with the disability to achieve the fullest measure of personal development of which he or she is capable. These include the right to equal opportunity in education..." (*Welcome and Justice for Persons with Disabilities, A Framework of Access and Inclusion*. USCCB, 1998). Senate Bill 706 will help Maryland to ensure that those whose calling is to teach children with disabilities are equitably compensated, as well as set standards to ensure the best education enabling members of the disability community to achieve the fullest measure of personal development possible.

It is for these reasons we request a favorable report on Senate Bill 706.