



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

March 4, 2022

**House Bill 995
Early Childhood Development – Child Care Scholarship Program – Alterations**

House Ways and Means Committee

SUPPORT

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in SUPPORT to House Bill 995. 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 995 establishes a process for presumptive eligibility for families for the Maryland Child Care Scholarship Program. This legislation requires the Maryland State Department of Education to award a subsidy under the program in an amount sufficient to ensure that a parent or guardian will not have to pay a copay for child care if they show participation in WIC, SNAP, SSI, TCA or other programs.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has supported proposals seeking to “expand assistance to parents with children and improve family formation and stability.” (*Letter to Congress on Child Tax Credit*, USCCB, 2016). In the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace asserted that all persons deserve “a wage sufficient to maintain a family and allow it to live decently... There can be several different ways to make a family wage a concrete reality. Various forms of important social provisions help to bring it about, for example, family subsidies and other contributions for dependent family members...”

The parameters put in House Bill 995 are a tangible way to achieve this stability for low-income families throughout the state. Child Care is an essential component to supporting strong, economically secure families and thus the Church supports this bill as a part of its priority interest in alleviating poverty. Enabling parents’ continued access to child care services is an imperative part of combating poverty. Often, a barrier to sustainable and full-time employment is the availability and affordability of reliable child care services.

The Conference appreciates your consideration, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 995.