



January 19, 2023

SB 03

9-8-8 Trust Fund – Funding

Senate Budget & Taxation 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.

Senate Bill 03 will require the Governor to include in the fiscal 2025 annual budget bill an appropriation of \$12.0 million to the 9-8-8 Trust Fund.

Behavioral health issues, including depression and suicide, are public health challenges that cause immeasurable pain among individuals, families, and communities across the country. This is an urgent issue that the Maryland General Assembly and citizens of Maryland must address. Senate Bill 03 is a crucial step for Maryland to meet the needs of individuals facing a serious behavioral health crisis.

Those experiencing mental illness are among the most marginalized and underserved in our society. The Catholic Church through its parishes, charities and other ministries reaches out pastorally to those struggling with mental illness. Because the Catholic faith embraces an integrated view of the human person as both corporeal and spiritual, we welcome the sciences as one pathway to knowledge of the human person. Pope St. John Paul II said *"Whoever suffers from mental illness always bears God's image and likeness in themselves, as does every human being. In addition, they always have the inalienable right not only to be considered as an image of God and therefore as a person, but also to be treated as such."*

The Conference appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a **favorable** report on Senate Bill 03.