



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

March 21st, 2023

SB 941

Correctional Services - Inmates - Labor, Job Training, and Educational Courses

Senate judicial Proceedings Committee

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Senate Bill 941 establishes a minimum hourly compensation rate for inmate labor in Maryland Correctional Enterprises of \$5; requiring the Division of Correction to offer job training and educational courses to certain inmates; requiring the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to report annually on or before March 1 on the job training and educational courses offered by the Division; and requiring the Maryland Department of Labor to evaluate the job training and educational courses offered by the Division on an ongoing basis.

Maryland's Catholic bishops issued a statement on the Dignity of Work, in which they noted the Church's historic commitment to the right of all people to fair compensation for their labor. As early as the late 19th century, Pope Leo XIII claimed this principle was, "*a dictate of natural justice more imperious and ancient than any bargain between man and man.*"

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).

Senate Bill 941 is a restorative justice measure, and the Church maintains that systems of incarceration should always be centered on *restorative* justice. When inmates are incentivized with a just wage, 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 Senate Bill 941.

The Conference appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a **favorable** report on Senate Bill 941.