



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

March 22, 2023

Senate Bill 797

Task Force on Preventing and Countering Elder Abuse

House Judiciary 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 797's purpose is to establish a Task Force on Preventing and Countering Elder Abuse. The Task Force is authorized to (a) study relevant existing law, policies, and practices relating to elder abuse; and (b) to make recommendations regarding changes to these laws, policies, and practices. The Task Force shall submit a preliminary report to the Governor and the General Assembly on or before December 31, 2023, and a final report on or December 31, 2024. The law creating the Task Force would take effect on July 1, 2023, and the Task Force would remain effective for 2 years.

It is estimated that approximately 1 in 10 Americans over the age of 60 have experienced some form of elder abuse. Some estimates range as high as 5 million elders who are abused each year.¹ According to the Maryland Department of Aging, in Fiscal Year 2021, thousands of elder abuse complaints were filed.² Elder abuse takes many forms, including, but not limited to: (1) physical abuse; (2) financial abuse/exploitation; (3) psychological abuse; (4) sexual abuse; and (5) neglect/self-neglect.

The statistics show that we must do more to help prevent and counter elder abuse. The Maryland Catholic Conference supports legislation that aims to protect our most vulnerable

¹ <https://aging.maryland.gov/Pages/elder-abuse-prevention.aspx>

²

<https://aging.maryland.gov/SiteAssets/Pages/WEAAD/WEAAD%20Fact%20Sheet%20MD%20Fiscal%20Year%202021.pdf>

populations and believes that every individual deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. The Task Force created by SB 797 will study and make recommendations on how we can help our elders and provide them with a safer and better quality of life. For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report on **SB 797**.

Thank you for your consideration.