



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

March 28th, 2023

HB 323

Social Services Programs - Eligibility and Enrollment

Senate Education, Energy, & Environment Committee

Position: Favorable

The 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.

House Bill 323 requires the Department of Human Services to enroll individuals, who meet certain financial eligibility requirements, in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and require the Office of Home Energy Programs to enroll individuals, based on certain eligibility, in certain Office of Home Energy Programs assistance programs; and altering the eligibility requirements for the electric universal service program to provide assistance to customers with annual incomes at or below 200% of the federal poverty level.

The Conference strongly supports the preservation of funding for the social safety net, especially in areas of poverty alleviation, hunger and nutrition, affordable housing, and lifesaving policies to address climate change. As stated in a message by Pope Francis during the Second World Day of the Poor, June 13, 2018: "We are called to honour the poor and to give them precedence, out of the conviction that they are a true presence of Jesus in our midst. 'As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.' (Mt. 25:40)."

The Conference appreciates your consideration and respectfully urges a **favorable** report for House Bill 323.