



March 2, 2023

HB 1106

**Maryland College Investment Plan – Subtraction Modification Amounts and Eligibility
and Establishment of Accounts**

**House Ways & Means Committee
House Appropriations Committee**

Position: FAVORABLE

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill 1106 on behalf of the families of approximately 50,000 students served by more than 150 PreK-12 Catholic schools in Maryland. The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of House Bill 486. 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 1106 would significantly expand the tax benefits for parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings and other family members for contributions made to Maryland 529 College Investment Plans. Additionally, the bill provides for accounts to be opened for any child considered a “ward of the state”. A \$500 annual contribution would be made by the state for each of those children.

The Church emphasizes special attention toward advancing opportunities for children who might be marginalized in having less educational opportunity than others. 529 College Savings Plans significantly improve access to a college education for marginalized students through the “miracle of compound interest”. States should do all that they can to level the playing fields across income levels regarding access to education. The Conference supports legislation, such as House Bill 1106, that promotes access to “education, access to health care, and above all employment, for it is through free, creative, participatory and mutually supportive labor that human beings express and enhance the dignity of their lives.” (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 192). It is through education that citizens find a pathway toward economic security and the dignity of work. This program is a creative and worthwhile investment in providing those things for future generations.

This bill would particularly incentivize college savings for low-income students, particularly those who are considered “wards of the state”. It is in the best interest for Maryland’s future to ensure that low-income students have access to continue their education and avail themselves to diversified workforce opportunities. Therefore, we urge this Committee to report favorably on House Bill 1106.