



**MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE**

February 28, 2024

HB 694

Governor's Office for Children - Engaging Neighborhoods, Organizations, Unions, Governments, and Households (ENOUGH) Grant Program (ENOUGH Act of 2024)

**House Appropriations Committee
House Health & Government Operations Committee**

Position: FAVORABLE

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of House Bill 694. 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 694, the ENOUGH Act, would direct fiscal resources to the most in-need Maryland communities for community organizations, nonprofits, faith-based organizations and others to together develop action plans to address local poverty. This legislation fosters solidarity by bringing together diverse stakeholders to work toward a common goal of alleviating poverty.

This legislation emphasizes the importance of justice in addressing systemic issues that perpetuate poverty. By engaging community organizations and other key stakeholders, the legislation seeks to address root causes of poverty and promote lasting change in our communities.

This legislation also provides an opportunity for Catholic parishes and nonprofits to collaborate with other community stakeholders, leveraging their resources and expertise to develop innovative solutions to poverty in their own communities. The Church has been a longstanding partner with the State of Maryland in combatting poverty and the Church relishes the opportunity to further partner with the state in this important mission.

The preferential option for the poor and vulnerable is a foremost pillar of Catholic social teaching. The Church strongly supports the continuation of anti-poverty programs that address the basic needs of its poorest individuals and families, including those tackling food insecurity, affordable housing, and unemployment. In his address on the Second World Day of the Poor (2018), Pope Francis clearly illustrated this importance in stating how "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.’”

The collaborative approach to fighting poverty embodied in House Bill 694 reflects the Catholic belief in the interconnectedness of all people and the responsibility to care for the marginalized and vulnerable members of society. Thus, we request a favorable report on House Bill 694.