



MARYLAND CATHOLIC

CONFERENCE

March 08, 2024

HB 961

State Government – Commission on New Americans - Established

House Health & Government Committee

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) offers this testimony in support of House Bill 961. 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 961 would establish the Commission on New Americans. This legislation would help to recognize and value the contributions of immigrants and refugees to our state and society.

Our Catholic faith calls us to welcome the stranger and to extend hospitality and compassion to those who are new to our communities. Immigrants and refugees bring with them unique talents, experiences, and perspectives that enrich the fabric of our society and contribute to our shared prosperity and well-being. However, they also face significant challenges as they navigate unfamiliar systems and seek to establish themselves in their new homes.

The establishment of the Commission on New Americans represents a proactive approach to addressing the needs and concerns of immigrant and refugee communities. By studying and periodically reporting on the contributions of new Americans and the availability of government services for them, the Commission can provide valuable insights and recommendations for policymakers to better support and integrate immigrants and refugees into our communities.

The provision in the legislation that requires the Commission to submit a quantitative report detailing the contributions of new Americans and the services available to them throughout the state highlights the positive impact of immigrants and refugees on our economy, culture, and social fabric and identifies areas where additional support and resources may be needed to ensure their successful integration and participation in civic life.

The MCC appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 961.

