MARYLAND CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

March 05, 2024

HB 1271
Information Technology – Artificial Intelligence – Policies and Procedures (Artificial Intelligence Governance Act of 2024)

House Health & Government Operations Committee

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) offers this testimony in support of House Bill 1271. 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 1271 concerns the regulation and oversight of artificial intelligence (AI) systems within State government. The Catholic tradition emphasizes the inherent dignity of every human person and calls us to exercise stewardship over technology in a manner that upholds this dignity and serves the common good. It is essential to establish clear guidelines and safeguards for the development and deployment of AI systems within government operations.

The proposed legislation, which requires each unit of State government to conduct inventories and assessments of AI systems, as well as prohibiting the implementation or use of AI systems under certain circumstances, reflects a responsible and prudent approach to governance. By mandating transparency and accountability in the utilization of AI technologies, this legislation seeks to mitigate potential risks and ensure that these systems are deployed in a manner consistent with ethical principles and the public interest.

The establishment of the Governor's Artificial Intelligence Subcabinet represents an important step towards coordinated oversight and strategic planning in this rapidly evolving field. This Subcabinet, tasked with monitoring AI implementation and adopting policies and procedures to safeguard against misuse, has the potential to promote responsible innovation while protecting the rights and dignity of Maryland residents.

This bill embodies principles of ethical governance, transparency, and respect for human dignity. By enacting robust regulations and oversight mechanisms for AI systems, Maryland can lead by example in promoting responsible innovation. The MCC appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 1271.