



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

January 30, 2024

Senate Bill 153

**Maryland Department of Transportation – Child Exploitation and Human
Trafficking Awareness, Training, and Response
Judicial Proceedings Committee**

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) 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.

Senate Bill 153 requires the Maryland Department of Transportation to develop and implement a training program for certain transportation-sector employees on the identification and reporting of suspected child exploitation and human trafficking. The bill requires specific employees to complete the training program, and employers to certify this completion. The bill also requires pertinent employers, in consultation with the Department, to establish a procedure for reporting suspected incidents of child exploitation or human trafficking to appropriate staff, law enforcement, or the National Human Trafficking Resource Center Hotline. Employers shall implement a child exploitation and human trafficking prevention policy for employees. The bill also calls for the Department to develop signage and require placement at certain locations to help provide information and resources for child exploitation and human trafficking victims. The legislation also requires frequent public service announcements in both English and Spanish at Transit Stations, Airports, Port Facilities, and Highway Rest Stops.

The Maryland Catholic Conference supports this bill because it educates those working in the transportation sector on trafficking and aids law enforcement in their efforts to identify and end human trafficking. It will also help the public become more aware of how they can help fight against trafficking. It will also help victims learn how they can report trafficking. Horribly, Maryland's central location has facilitated its development as both a pass-through state and a destination for human traffickers. Traffickers utilize many of Maryland's highways, especially Interstate-95, to connect victims to major east coast cities such as New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. The Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force has identified incidents of sex trafficking at Maryland truck stops, and data from the National Human

Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) suggests that approximately 70 percent of human trafficking incidents occur in our nation's truck stops.¹ Three major airports, inexpensive bus transportation, train service along the east coast, large sporting events, and disposable income makes Maryland an increasingly attractive destination for traffickers.² Pope Francis frequently condemns the horror of trafficking in persons, declaring, "Human trafficking is an open wound on the body of contemporary society, a scourge upon the body of Christ."³

This bill will go a long way in helping fight against child exploitation and human trafficking. For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report on **SB 153**.

Thank you for your consideration.

¹ <http://www.mdhumantrafficking.org/maryland>

² <https://goccp.maryland.gov/victim-services/human-trafficking/>

³ https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/april/documents/papa-francesco_20140410_tratta-persone-umane.html