



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 6, 2024

HB 488

Qualifying Nonprofit Organizations - Training and Reentry Services - Funding

House Judiciary Committee

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of House Bill 488. 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 488 would appropriate state funding in the amount of \$1,000,000 for three fiscal years to enable the State of Maryland to partner with nonprofit organizations to provide vocational training in automotive repair for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals.

In its pastoral statement "*Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice*" (USCCB, 2000), the United States conference of Catholic Bishops placed significant weight on efforts to reduce recidivism in criminal justice reform measures. The USCCB stated, "We call upon government to redirect the vast amount of public resources away from building more and more prisons and toward better and more effective programs aimed at crime prevention, rehabilitation, education efforts, substance abuse treatment, and programs of probation, parole and reintegration."

The Church maintains that systems of incarceration should be centered around restorative justice. Efforts to reduce incidences of recidivism are imperative to ensuring system-involved citizens have a legitimate chance to turn their lives around and lead productive lives upon release from incarceration. This legislation is a creative solution for exactly that.

Moreover, providing inmates with vocational skill training both prior to or upon release from prison elevates the dignity of work in our state. The Conference supports legislation that promotes access to "education..... 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).

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on House Bill 488.