



**MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE**

February 27, 2024

**HB 118
Correctional Services – Geriatric and Medical Parole**

**House Judiciary Committee
Position: FAVORABLE**

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of House Bill 118. 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 118 would afford the parole commission the ability to determine whether certain inmates who are at least 60 years of age and have served at least 15 years of a sentence should be released on parole due to their age and low risk to public safety. It would also allow for expansion of medical parole for those inmates deemed to be “chronically debilitated or incapacitated”. The commission would consider multiple factors such as illness, prognosis, available family support, and age in determining eligibility for medical parole.

The Catholic Church roots much of its social justice teaching in the inherent dignity of every human person and the principals of forgiveness, redemption and restoration. Catholic doctrine provides that the criminal justice system should serve three principal purposes: (1) the preservation and protection of the common good of society, (2) the restoration of public order, and (3) the restoration or conversion of the offender. Thus, the Church recognizes the importance of striking a balance between protecting the common good and attentiveness to rehabilitation.

The Conference submits that this legislation seeks to embody these principles and purposes, relative to intersection between our justice system and our communities, victims and offenders. Older inmates who have served much of their sentence or are medically incapacitated or need treatment outside of the prison system certainly merit the mercy of a consideration for re-entry into society.

House Bill 118 would restore hope for elderly offenders or for those in need of certain medical treatment seeking to reincorporate themselves into society, where they can be cared for by the community, as opposed to behind bars. This is particularly warranted where they pose no danger to society. The Maryland Catholic Conference thus urges this committee to return a favorable report on House Bill 118.