



March 7, 2025

SB 819

Public Schools - Open Enrollment - Policies and Funding

**Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
Senate Budget & Taxation Committee**

Position: FAVORABLE

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of Senate Bill 819. 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.

Senate Bill 819 would allow parents to choose the public school best suited to their child's needs by allowing county boards of education to adopt open enrollment policies to authorize students to attend, free of charge, a public school in a county other than the county where the student is domiciled. Funding would be in turn directed to the county in which the student is enrolled.

All three of (arch)dioceses serving Maryland have a strong commitment to education and recognize the important role that education plays in a child's development and future. Within the State of Maryland, Catholic schools serve approximately 50,000 students over nearly 150 schools. Additionally, tens of thousand more Catholic parishioners send their children to our state's public schools.

The parental choice option provided by this proposal aligns succinctly with the mission of our faith tradition, which holds that parents are the first educators of their children. The state owes a duty to ensure all of Maryland's children are afforded the educational opportunities best suited to their needs, regardless of whether that is a public or nonpublic school. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report for Senate Bill 819.