



**February 11, 2025
SB312**

**Natural Resources - State Parks - Maryland Golden Age Pass
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) offers this testimony in support of **Senate Bill 312**. 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 312 establishes the Maryland Golden Age Pass, which grants its holders free day-use entry to specific State parks. Additionally, it waives boat launch fees at any State Park for pass holders. The bill also extends free entry privileges to all passengers in the same vehicle as the pass holder under certain conditions.

This bill aligns with Catholic social teaching principles of stewardship of creation and the common good. By making natural resources accessible to seniors and their families, it honors the dignity of older adults and promotes environmental appreciation. Supporting this bill reflects the Church's call to care for creation while fostering community and equity.

This bill promotes accessibility to State parks for older residents, encouraging outdoor recreation, fostering community well-being, and enhancing mental and physical health. By removing financial barriers, it increases park usage and supports conservation awareness. The legislation also strengthens intergenerational connections by enabling families to enjoy nature together.

The MCC appreciates your consideration and respectfully urges a favorable report for **Senate Bill 312**.