



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 14, 2025

HB527

**Maryland Transit Administration - Purple Line - Free Ridership and Advertising
Environment and Transportation Committee
Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of **House Bill 527**. 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 527 requires the Maryland Transit Administration to implement a program offering free ridership on the Purple Line transit vehicles for the first three months of service to residents living within a quarter-mile of the Purple Line track. Additionally, the bill provides free advertising opportunities on Purple Line transit vehicles and at transit stations for businesses located within the same quarter-mile radius. This initiative aims to support local communities and promote economic engagement in areas directly affected by the Purple Line's development.

From the lens of Catholic social teaching, this legislation embodies several core principles. The preferential option for the poor and vulnerable is evident in its efforts to alleviate the financial burden of transportation for those living near the Purple Line. Providing free advertising space for local businesses aligns with the principle of subsidiarity by supporting small-scale economic development. Moreover, the program's emphasis on public transit highlights our moral responsibility to care for creation by reducing environmental harm and promoting sustainable practices. Addressing environmental burdens that disproportionately affect communities near transit projects demonstrates a commitment to the common good, ensuring that development enhances the dignity and well-being of all residents, particularly those most impacted by such projects.

House Bill 527 directly benefits communities surrounding the Purple Line by fostering greater accessibility to public transportation while alleviating potential financial burdens during the initial transition period. By offering free advertising space to nearby businesses, the program promotes economic growth, particularly for small businesses that are integral to local economies. The legislation also encourages public transit use, which reduces congestion and pollution, ultimately contributing to a healthier and more sustainable environment.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference urges a favorable report on **House Bill 527**.