



February 6, 2025

SB353

**Food Deserts Workgroup - Establishment
Finance Committee**

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) offers this testimony in support of **Senate Bill 353**. 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 353 creates a workgroup to examine and develop recommendations for addressing food deserts in Maryland. The workgroup will study the causes, effects, and potential solutions to eliminate these areas where access to affordable, nutritious food is limited. A report outlining key findings and solutions will be submitted to the Governor and relevant General Assembly committees by November 1, 2025.

Catholic social teaching emphasizes the importance of ensuring that all individuals have access to the necessities of life, including nutritious food. This bill aligns with the Church's principles of solidarity and care for the poor by seeking to address food deserts, which disproportionately affect low-income and marginalized communities. Supporting this initiative reflects a commitment to promoting justice, human dignity, and the common good.

This legislation has the potential to significantly improve public health and community well-being by addressing food insecurity in underserved areas. By identifying sustainable solutions, the workgroup can help provide access to healthy, affordable food for vulnerable populations, support local economies, and reduce health disparities caused by poor nutrition. Ultimately, these efforts can foster stronger, more equitable communities across the state. Creating a stronger and healthier community for all Marylanders.

The MCC appreciates your consideration and respectfully urges a favorable report for **Senate Bill 353**.