

**HB541**  
**Department of Commerce – Nonprofit Organizations Navigator - Established**  
Health and Government Operations Committee  
February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
**Support**

**Catholic Charities of Baltimore supports House Bill 541**, which would create the position of Nonprofit Organizations Navigator within the Department of Commerce.

For a century, Catholic Charities has provided care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. We accompany Marylanders as they age with dignity, support their pursuit of employment and career advancement, heal from trauma and addiction, achieve independence, prepare for educational success, and welcome immigrant neighbors into Maryland communities.

Catholic Charities applauds this bill's recognition of the issues and delays involved in the State of Maryland's grant-making process, and we support the addition of a Nonprofit Organizations Navigator position to help resolve these issues.

Catholic Charities, as with other non-profits throughout the state, relies heavily on grant funding to support our programs and services. We are fortunate enough to have staff who can dedicate their time to researching and preparing grant applications, and their experience is reflected here in this testimony. They report issues with the following: contradictory or unclear technical instructions around grant application requirements; lack of responsiveness or any form of contact from State staff members; inconsistent claims from State staff members that our renewal grant applications were not received; short-notice due dates; and incorrect payments. Staff in our finance department report issues with payment, including most recently, receipt of a grant payment check that was issued to the incorrect program, with no accompanying documentation or clarification, requiring significant staff time to sort out which program the funds were supposed to be applied to. For smaller non-profits, these kinds of issues can have an even greater impact on the organizations' ability to provide services to its constituents.

Passing this bill will help ensure that the State of Maryland is a faithful steward of funding and is effectively supporting Maryland residents through state grant funds. That goal of local financial fidelity is becoming more and more important with the current federal policy changes around federal grant access. As the largest non-profit human services provider in the state of Maryland, and the largest Head Start licensee in the state, Associated Catholic Charities Inc. knows that every awarded grant dollar has been fought for and proven necessary, and there should be no unnecessary barriers to receiving awarded grant funds. The State of Maryland should be a model State in terms of how funding is handled and distributed, and this new Navigator position will be an asset to the State's various funding offices, nonprofits, and residents.

**For these reasons, Catholic Charities of Baltimore urges the committee to issue a favorable report for HB541.**

Submitted By: Madelin Martinez, Assistant Director of Advocacy