



February 13, 2025

HB 522

Department of Juvenile Services - Rehabilitation Services - Funding

House Judiciary Committee

Position: FAVORABLE w/ AMENDMENT

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony of favorable with amendment to House Bill 522. 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 522 would authorize the Department of Juvenile Services to provide funding for rehabilitation services for system-involved youth. This bill seeks to provide those youth with substance abuse treatment and rehabilitation services for up to one year.

In the pastoral statement *Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice* (2000), the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops stated, "We call upon government to redirect the vast amount of public resources away from building more and more prisons and toward better and more effective programs aimed at crime prevention, rehabilitation, education efforts, substance abuse treatment, and programs of probation, parole and reintegration." The Church remains a strong advocate for restorative justice, particularly within the juvenile system and, to that end, the Conference supports the aim of this legislation.

The Governor's budget includes a \$3 million allocation to support residential substance abuse treatment for youth through DJS. However, much greater study and deliberation is needed to continue and advance DJS in its mission to expand residential substance abuse treatment programs for system-involved youth to the level Maryland needs.

Thus, the Conference requests amendments to strike the contents of this legislation and add language requiring the Commission on Juvenile Justice Reform and Emerging Best Practices to study the need for substance use treatment services statewide. Thank you for your consideration.