



MARYLAND  
CATHOLIC  
CONFERENCE

March 19<sup>th</sup> 2026

**HB1458**

**State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Refugees and Asylees –  
Establishment**

**Appropriations Committee**

**Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of **House Bill 1458**. The Maryland 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 1458** would create a program administered by the Maryland Department of Human Services designed to expand food access for eligible refugee and asylee households in the state. The legislation authorizes the Department to provide a supplemental food benefit to certain individuals who may face barriers to receiving adequate nutrition during their transition and integration into their new communities. Additionally, the legislation directs the Department to adopt the necessary regulations to ensure the effective implementation and administration of the program.

The intent of this legislation is to address a critical gap in food access for individuals who have come to the United States seeking safety and stability. Refugees and asylees often arrive after experiencing significant hardship and displacement, and many face challenges during their initial resettlement period, including securing employment, housing, and stable access to food. By establishing a state-level supplemental program, this legislation aims to provide temporary support that helps families meet their basic nutritional needs while they work toward stability and self-sufficiency.

This legislation reflects the principles of human dignity, solidarity, and the preferential option for the poor and vulnerable. Our faith calls us to welcome the stranger and to ensure that those who arrive in our communities seeking safety are treated with compassion and respect. Access to necessities such as food is fundamental to preserving the dignity of every person and supporting the well-being of families. Ensuring that refugees and asylee families have reliable access to food strengthens communities by promoting health, stability, and successful integration. Families with access to nutritious food are better able to focus on employment, education, and community engagement. Children benefit from improved health and learning outcomes, while communities benefit from the contributions of individuals who are able to fully participate in society. Providing this support also helps reduce the long-term social and economic costs associated with food insecurity and instability.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference urges a favorable report on **House Bill 1458**.