



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 24th 2026

HB711

Data Privacy - Consumer Data, Public Records, and Message Switching System (Data Privacy Act)

Economic Matters Committee

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of **House Bill 711**. 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.

The Data Privacy Act seeks to strengthen Maryland's protections over sensitive consumer information by preventing the sale or transfer of personal data to any entity that intends to use that information for immigration enforcement. The bill also requires custodians of public records to exercise due diligence in determining whether access requests relate to immigration law enforcement and ensures that message switching systems are operated with safeguards to prevent misuse.

House Bill 711 safeguards the privacy and dignity of Marylanders by closing loopholes that allow personal data to be misused by third parties. It reinforces transparency, accountability, and trust between the public and the institutions that collect and manage their data. By preventing consumer data from becoming a tool for unnecessary fear or punitive enforcement, the bill provides a clear and tangible benefit to immigrant communities, families, and all individuals who depend on the integrity of public systems for their safety and well-being.

This legislation would help Maryland communities by ensuring that personal information remains protected and is used only for lawful and ethical purposes. Families often live under the stress that a simple data breach can disrupt their stability, employment, or safety. Protecting data at the governmental and system levels strengthens public trust and promotes a society in which individuals feel secure engaging in civic life, using public services, and participating fully in their communities. The misuse of personal data can lead to fear, exploitation, or harm—particularly among immigrant populations who already face heightened vulnerability. The Data Privacy Act affirms that each person is more than information to be traded; they are a child of God deserving of safety, respect, and protection.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference urges a favorable report on **House Bill 711**.