



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

March 3rd 2026

SB719

Consumer Protection - Artificial Intelligence Toys (Artificial Intelligence Toy Safety Act)
Economic Matters Committee
Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of **Senate Bill 719**. 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.

Senate Bill 719 establishes guardrails that protect children's privacy, psychological well-being, and developmental safety. It requires AI-enabled toys to carry proper labeling, sets limits on how manufacturers may use the data collected from children, and prohibits the use of that data for targeted or manipulative marketing. These protections are critical at a time when children are interacting with smart devices capable of learning from, recording, and shaping their behavior.

This bill ensures that toys integrating artificial intelligence meet clear standards of safety, transparency, and responsible data practices. As AI becomes increasingly common in products marketed to children, this bill seeks to prevent unsafe, opaque, or manipulative technologies from entering the marketplace. It addresses a growing gap in consumer protection law by ensuring that families understand the capabilities of AI-driven toys and the nature of the data collected.

Children deserve environments that nurture their growth and respect their inherent worth—never spaces where they can be surveilled, profiled, or manipulated for profit. The preferential option for the vulnerable calls us to prioritize safeguards for those least able to protect themselves. Because children cannot recognize risks the way adults can, it becomes the responsibility of caregivers, policymakers, and society to ensure the environments we place them in—digital or physical—are safe. Protecting children's privacy and emotional well-being is essential to fostering healthy development. Early childhood is a sensitive period for cognitive growth, social learning, imagination, and trust-building.

Ensuring strong protections around AI-enabled toys acknowledges that childhood is a foundational stage of life. By safeguarding what children see, hear, and share, we preserve their innocence, strengthen their safety, and support their ability to explore and learn freely.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference urges a favorable report on **Senate Bill 719**.