



MARYLAND  
CATHOLIC  
CONFERENCE

**March 4, 2026**

**SB 659**

**Prekindergarten Programs and Primary and Secondary Schools - Student Privacy  
Policy Requirements and Discrimination Reporting**

**Senate Education, Energy & the Environment Committee**

**Position: UNFAVORABLE**

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 659. 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. The Maryland Catholic Conference also offers this testimony on behalf of the families of approximately 50,000 students served by more than 150 PreK-12 Catholic schools in Maryland.

In 2022, our nonpublic school communities came to the table in good faith to pass the sweeping education nondiscrimination legislation (HB 850 of 2022). Procedures and policies are currently in place for compliance with that law through MSDE, and those apply to both public and nonpublic schools. However, Senate Bill 659 unilaterally imposes upon nonpublic faith-based schools the requirement to report to MSDE on many vaguely defined "incidents" of discrimination applicable to a host of persons and scenarios, including students, "prospective students", parents, guardians, employees, volunteers. This would be for incidents occurring during school, while on transportation or at extracurricular events.

In addition to the massively broad reporting terminology and categories, the incidents cover a host of classifications including religion, disability or sex, wherein current law contains exemptions for faith-based schools or single sex schools, just to note three examples. Those exemptions codify practical, legal (per federal law) and/or constitutional protections afforded to schools. This bill contradicts those provisions in Maryland law.

Additionally, we are concerned that this legislation will open the door to disaffected parents or students to pursue complaints against schools out of malice. Even if and when such actions are determined to be baseless, the cost in time, stress, reputation and resources to our schools may be significant and damaging. For the aforementioned reasons, we request this committee to report unfavorably on Senate Bill 659.