



**March 4, 2026**

**SB 664**

**Child Care Scholarship Program - Priority for Child Care Providers**

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

**Position: FAVORABLE**

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of Senate Bill 664. 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.

Senate Bill 664 seeks to prioritize the children of individuals who provide care for children in licensed child care centers, registered family child care homes, and registered large family child care homes for scholarships under the Child Care Scholarship Program. The Maryland State Department of Education would be responsible for developing regulatory framework to administer this benefit.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has supported proposals seeking to "expand assistance to parents with children and improve family formation and stability." (*Letter to Congress on Child Tax Credit*, USCCB, 2016). In the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace asserted that all persons deserve "a wage sufficient to maintain a family and allow it to live decently... There can be several different ways to make a family wage a concrete reality. Various forms of important social provisions help to bring it about, for example, family subsidies and other contributions for dependent family members..."

These considerations apply in a twofold way for those who have dedicated their vocations to early childhood care and education. Those who work in early child care need to ensure that their own children are cared for in order to be able to dedicate their calling to serving other children. Ensuring them priority for child care scholarships will ensure that they are able to continue to provide this much-needed service, particularly when Maryland has seen shortages in recent years. For that reason, the Conference respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 664.