



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

March 5th 2026

HB1353

**Homeless Individuals - Fee and Examination Exemptions
Environment and Transportation Committee
Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of **House Bill 1353**. 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 1353 removes unnecessary financial and administrative barriers faced by individuals experiencing homelessness. This bill prohibits the Maryland Department of Health from collecting fees for vital records for homeless individuals, exempts vehicles owned by homeless individuals from registration fees, and adjusts the waiting period for unaccompanied homeless youth to obtain a provisional driver's license. At its core, the intent of this bill is simple yet profound: to ensure that those who are already facing immense hardship are not further held back by costs or bureaucratic delays as they work to rebuild their lives.

For individuals, access to a birth certificate, identification, or the ability to lawfully operate a vehicle is often the first step toward securing employment, housing, medical care, and education. For youth navigating homelessness without parental support, the ability to obtain a driver's license sooner can determine whether they can get to school, maintain a job, or reach a safe place at night. For communities, supporting pathways out of homelessness strengthens public safety, enhances neighborhood stability, and reduces long-term reliance on emergency services. For the state, easing these burdens promotes economic mobility and reflects a compassionate and fiscally sound approach to addressing homelessness.

Catholic social teaching reminds us that every person is endowed with inherent worth and must be supported in their efforts to achieve stability, security, and the opportunity to flourish. Removing financial barriers to essential documents is not simply an administrative change, it is an affirmation that no one should be denied the basic tools needed to survive and thrive. By lifting unnecessary burdens from our most vulnerable neighbors, we act with compassion, justice, and solidarity.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference urges a favorable report on **House Bill 1353**.