



April 2, 2026

**SB 61
Division of Correction - Volunteer Services Program**

House Government, Labor & Elections Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of Senate Bill 61. 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.

Senate Bill 61 would establish a Volunteer Services Program within the Division of Correction, allowing volunteers, including formerly incarcerated individuals, to serve correctional facilities for the purpose of assisting those currently incarcerated with their transition back into society.

The Catholic Church roots much of its social justice teaching in the inherent dignity of every human person and the principals of forgiveness, redemption and restoration. Catholic doctrine provides that the criminal justice system should serve three principal purposes: (1) the preservation and protection of the common good of society, (2) the restoration of public order, and (3) the restoration or conversion of the offender.

In its pastoral statement "*Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice*" (USCCB, 2000), the United States conference of Catholic Bishops stated, "We call upon government to redirect the vast amount of public resources away from building more and more prisons and toward better and more effective programs aimed at crime prevention, *rehabilitation, education efforts*, substance abuse treatment, and programs of probation, parole and *reintegration*." The Church maintains that systems of incarceration should be centered around restorative justice and reintegration.

The Conference submits that this legislation provides a means to restoration for those that have been imprisoned by supporting their reentry into society, but also gives purpose and greater meaning to the experiences of those who have already reentered by affording them the ability to pass along wisdom and nurture to those about to reenter society. The Maryland Catholic Conference thus urges this committee to return a favorable report on Senate Bill 61.