



MARYLAND  
CATHOLIC  
CONFERENCE

February 25, 2026

**SB 776 - Commission on the House of Reformation and Instruction for Colored Children -  
Establishment**

**Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) offers testimony in support of Senate Bill 776. 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.

**Commitment to Human Dignity and Historical Truth**

The Catholic Church teaches that every human person is endowed with inherent dignity, and that societies have a moral responsibility to safeguard the vulnerable and to confront injustices—past and present—with honesty and humility. The history of the House of Reformation and Instruction for Colored Children reflects a deeply painful chapter in Maryland's treatment of Black children, many of whom suffered neglect, abuse, and, in some cases, death while under state custody.

For too long, the stories of these children have remained obscured or unacknowledged. A full and public accounting is not only historically necessary; it is a matter of justice.

**Why This Commission Matters**

This legislation establishes a Commission charged with researching the institution's history, operations, and resident deaths, and with identifying the children who died and were buried on the grounds. The requirement of a final report to the Governor and General Assembly by December 31, 2029 ensures that this work will be thorough, transparent, and accessible to the public.

The Maryland Catholic Conference supports this effort because:

- Truth-telling is essential to justice. A society cannot heal from past wrongs unless those wrongs are first brought into the light.
- The dignity of these children must be restored. Many were denied even the basic recognition of their lives and deaths.
- Families and descendants deserve clarity and acknowledgment.

- Maryland benefits from an honest reckoning with its history, particularly where racial injustice and the mistreatment of children intersect. This Commission provides a responsible and compassionate means of honoring the memory of children who were not honored in life.

### **A Step Toward Healing and Reconciliation**

Catholic social teaching calls us to solidarity and to the work of reconciliation. By supporting this legislation, Maryland affirms that the lives of these children mattered and that their suffering will not be forgotten. This is a meaningful step toward healing—one rooted in truth, transparency, and respect for human dignity.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference respectfully urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 776.