



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 25, 2026

HB 26
Public Schools - Open Enrollment - Policies and Funding

House Ways & Means Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of House Bill 26. 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.

House Bill 26 would allow parents to choose the public school best suited to their child's needs by allowing county boards of education to adopt open enrollment policies to authorize students to attend, free of charge, a public school in a county other than the county where the student is domiciled. Funding would be in turn directed to the county in which the student is enrolled.

“(t)he overall education of children is a “most serious duty” and at the same time a “primary right” of parents. This is not just a task or a burden, but an essential and inalienable right that parents are called to defend and of which no one may claim to deprive them. The State offers educational programmes in a subsidiary way, supporting the parents in their indeclinable role; parents themselves enjoy the right to choose freely the kind of education – accessible and of good quality....”

- Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 2016

The parental choice option provided by this proposal aligns succinctly with the mission of our faith tradition, which holds that parents are the first educators of their children. The state owes a duty to ensure all of Maryland's children are afforded the educational opportunities best suited to their needs, regardless of whether that is a public or nonpublic school.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report for House Bill 26.

