



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 11, 2026

HB438

Adult Prison School Board Model Development Committee

House Ways & Means Committee

House Government, Labor & Elections Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of House Bill 438. 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 438 would form an Adult Prison School Board Model Development Committee. This committee would bring together various stakeholders, experts and agencies to develop a comprehensive plan for a school board system to oversee correctional education for individuals subject to the criminal and juvenile justice systems. The Committee would conduct a fiscal mapping projection for correctional education that examines the needs and options necessary to sustain a school board system. The plan developed by the commit would consider educational standards aligned with those for other school systems in the State.

“Not all offenders are open to treatment, but all deserve to be challenged and encouraged to turn their lives around. Programs in jails and prisons that offer offenders education, life skills, religious expression, and recovery from substance abuse greatly reduce recidivism, benefit society, and help the offenders when they reintegrate into the community. These programs need to be made available at correctional institutions regardless of the level of security and be offered, to the extent possible, in the language of prisoners.”

Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice (USCCB, 2000)

The Conference firmly supports systems of restorative justice, as the same are rooted in our faith tenets. In the aforementioned pastoral statement, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops cited the “absence of educational opportunities” among considerations “contributing to a high rate of recidivism”. The USCCB also cited “education” as one of the key “necessities that enable inmates to live in dignity”. Access to education within corrections systems are a core value in systems of truly restorative justice.

This legislation may better equip Maryland to propel incarcerated individuals to a world of opportunity, enabling successful reintegration into society and empower formerly incarcerated individuals to experience the dignity of work and provide direction in their lives outside of the prison walls. For these reasons, we request a favorable report on House Bill 438.