



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

**February 04, 2021**

**SB 194**

**Correctional Services – Inmates – Labor, Job Training, and Educational Courses**

**Senate Finance Committee**

**Position: Support**

The Maryland Catholic Conference (“Conference”) represents the public-policy interests of the three Roman Catholic (arch) dioceses serving Maryland: the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Archdiocese of Washington, and the Diocese of Wilmington.

Senate Bill 194 would require the compensation rate for inmate labor in Maryland Correctional Enterprises to be not less than the State minimum wage; repealing a requirement that the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services reimburse a certain county or the State for certain costs from an inmate’s earnings under certain circumstances; prohibiting the Department from deducting certain costs from an inmate’s earnings; requiring the Division of Correction to offer job training to certain inmates; requiring the Division to partner with labor unions and 10 trade associations to develop certain training programs; requiring certain training to focus on certain skills; requiring the Division to offer educational courses to certain inmates; requiring certain educational courses to include certain types of courses and subjects; requiring the Department to report to the Governor and General Assembly on certain matters on or before a certain date annually.

Maryland’s Catholic bishops issued a statement on the Dignity of Work, in which they noted the Church’s historic commitment to the right of all people to fair compensation for their labor. As early as the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Pope Leo XIII claimed this principle was, “*a dictate of natural justice more imperious and ancient than any bargain between man and man.*”

Additionally, the Conference firmly supports restorative justice practices. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has stated that “*People must be held accountable for their actions but justice and restoration must be the object of punishment which must have a constructive and reformatory purpose*” (*Restorative Justice: Healing and Transformation of Persons, Families and Communities*, USCCB, 2015).

Senate Bill 194 is a restorative justice measure and the Church maintains that systems of incarceration should always be centered on *restorative* justice. When inmates are incentivized with a just wage, to obtain an education, or further their academic credentials, their chances to break free from their often-challenging circumstances and live productive lives post-release are exponentially enhanced. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 194.