



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

February 18, 2021

**House Bill 903
Task Force to Study the Maryland Public Guardianship Program**

House Health and Government Operations Committee

Position: Support

The Maryland Catholic 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, which together encompass over one million Marylanders.

House Bill 903 establishes a taskforce to review the guardianship procedure for older and vulnerable adults. The taskforce will be comprised of members of appropriate government agencies, healthcare professionals, and experts on aging.

Guardianship exists as a last resort to protect and advocate for adults aged 65 and older who cannot make decisions for themselves. Vulnerability can increase as we age. Protecting the interests of the aging by appropriately determining their capacity, finding or appointing a caregiver, and ensuring they are supported in day-to-day living is a worthy task and ought to be fully studied.

Older adults are also at risk of elder abuse which should enter into the conversation of the taskforce. According to the National Council on Aging, “approximately 1 in 10 Americans aged 60+ have experienced some form of elder abuse. Some estimates range as high as 5 million elders who are abused each year.”

The Conference supports legislation that aims to protect our most vulnerable populations and believes that every individual, no matter how young or old, deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. For these reasons, the Conference urges a favorable report on **HB 903**.