



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

February 17, 2021

SB 515

Criminal Procedure – Registered Sex Offenders – Entry Onto School Property

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Position: Support

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of Senate Bill 515. The Catholic Conference represents the public policy interests of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, including the Archdioceses of Baltimore and Washington and the Diocese of Wilmington, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Maryland's Catholic schools educate than 50,000 students statewide.

Senate Bill 515 would ensure registered sex offender students do not enter school properties. However, if the registrant is a student, the bill would require each county board to develop and adopt a policy that would ensure their educational continuity.

The Church and its Catholic schools are committed to protecting the students educated in their classrooms. As a matter of course, Catholic schools conduct mandatory criminal background checks on all employees and on volunteers who work with children. They also provide comprehensive awareness training to educate adults and children on how to recognize predatory behaviors. Schools also adhere to the same vigilance with regard to students and policies to promote the safety of students from other students should be an additional priority in all of Maryland's schools.

This bill would afford schools the ability to ensure the safety of their students, while ensuring educational continuity for students who are registrants. It is a commonsense measure to further ensure the safety of all students, while giving those who have committed past wrongs a chance to complete their education, hopefully a key component in their rehabilitation process. The Conference urges a favorable report for Senate Bill 515.