



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

**January 20, 2021**

**SB74**

**Employee Assistance Programs/Mental Health Program- Police Officers**

**Senate Judicial Proceedings 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 74 would require each law enforcement agency to develop and implement an Employee Assistance Program which shall provide police officers access to confidential mental health services including counseling services; crisis counseling; stress management counseling; mental health evaluations; and peer support services. This bill is extremely crucial in the physical and mental well-being of our police officers in keeping them fit to serve in the line of duty.

Those experiencing mental illness are among the most marginalized and underserved in our society. The Catholic Church through its parishes, charities and other ministries reaches out pastorally to those struggling with mental illness. Because the Catholic faith embraces an integrated view of the human person as both corporeal and spiritual, we welcome the sciences as one pathway to knowledge of the human person. Pope St. John Paul II said "Whoever suffers from mental illness always bears God's image and likeness in themselves, as does every human being. In addition, they always have the inalienable right not only to be considered as an image of God and therefore as a person, but also to be treated as such."

Access to these types of mental health care services are imperative for the ability of police officers to protect and serve our communities

The Conference appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 74.