



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

**February 3, 2021**

**SB 601**

**Public Safety – Required Drug and Alcohol Testing for Law Enforcement Officers**

**Senate Judicial Proceeding 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 601 expands the procedures for conducting an investigation or interrogation under certain circumstances that may lead to disciplinary action, demotion, or dismissal of a law enforcement officer; establishing an exception to an existing authorization for a law enforcement agency to require a certain law enforcement officer to submit to certain testing under certain circumstances; requiring a law enforcement officer to submit to certain drug and alcohol testing under certain circumstances

The Church understands the need for accountability. Through our programs, parishes, schools and hospitals, professional accountability requirements are an important aspect of its everyday service to the public. Whether it be background check and certification requirements for teachers or licensure for medical professionals, the Church understands firsthand the safeguard such measures provide. Safeguards in ensuring physical and mental health of police officers uniquely entrusted to their communities, particularly relative to the use of force or discharge of a firearm, is an important step in police reform. In June of 2020, a letter was jointly submitted to all members of Congress by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) Chairmen of the Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, the Committee on Migration, and the Ad Hoc Committee against Racism, offering reflections and principles for police accountability and reform. Therein, the bishops called for “*greater accountability and means of redress regarding those who exercise public authority.*” This legislative proposal presents an important element in such accountability reform.

The Conference appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 601.