



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

February 17, 2021

HB 18

Landlord and Tenant - Eviction Action - Right to Counsel

House Judiciary 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.

House Bill 18 establishes that certain individuals have a right to legal representation in eviction proceedings; establishing the Right to Counsel in Evictions Coordinator to organize and direct services and resources to provide covered individuals with legal representation for a judicial or administrative proceeding; providing for the legal representation of certain individuals in certain proceedings and civil matters by certain organizations; providing for outreach and education regarding tenants' rights by certain community groups.

The foundation of Catholic Social Teaching is the recognition of the life and dignity of the human person. The Church has traditionally viewed housing, not as a commodity, but as a basic human right. This conviction is grounded in our view of the human person and the responsibility of society to protect the life and dignity of every person by providing the conditions where human life and human dignity are not undermined, but enhanced. As Pope John Paul II stated, "*A house is much more than a roof over one's head. It is "a place where a person creates and lives out his or her life."*

Our legal system rests upon the principle that everyone is entitled to due process of law and a meaningful opportunity to be heard. Thus, House Bill 18 will provide essential legal representation for our most vulnerable populations during the Covid-19 crisis.

The Conference appreciates your consideration and respectfully urges a favorable report for House Bill 18.