



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

February 4, 2021

**HB 612
Recovery for the Economy, Livelihoods, Industries, Entrepreneurs, and Families
(RELIEF) Act**

**House Ways & Means Committee
House Economic Matters Committee
Position: Support**

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill 612. The Conference represents the public policy interests of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, the Archdioceses of Baltimore and Washington and the Diocese of Wilmington, which together encompass over one million Marylanders.

House Bill 612 provides a package for much needed relief to Marylanders at a difficult time. As the second largest Maryland social service provider outside of our state government, the Church has experienced firsthand the ongoing needs of those in our state, most particularly our low-income and minority communities who have been disproportionately impacted by the coronavirus pandemic.

In offering our support for this package, the Conference would like to highlight its particular support for the add-on to the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). The Conference has lent continuous support for the EITC and previous attempts to expand the Credit to more Marylanders.

In a time when low-income Marylanders need assistance most, House Bill 612 seeks to invoke one of the most successful anti-poverty tools the state has in the EITC mechanism. It has been proven to have a direct and immediate effect on hardworking individuals who simply cannot make ends meet. It provides a meaningful boost to low-income workers and families, enabling them to make necessary purchases and take care of basic needs. It also provides a pathway to financial stability and provides financial assistance through a myriad of different ways, as recipients may elect to put the funding provided toward their savings accounts, educational expenses, or everyday expenses such as rent or food. While the EITC does provide a direct and measurable benefit to individual Marylanders, it is also a boost to local economies. It is estimated that for every \$1 invested in EITC, between \$1.50-2.00 is returned to the economy. This mechanism for assistance will likely thus provide a residual benefit for our small businesses in need.

The Conference appreciates your consideration and, for the reasons herein, respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 612.