



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

February 16, 2022

HB 724

Access to Counsel in Evictions Special Fund - Funding

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 724 would require the Comptroller to distribute a certain amount of certain abandoned property funds to the Access to Counsel in Evictions Special Fund; and generally relating to the Access to Counsel in Evictions Special Fund.

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 724.