



MARYLAND  
CATHOLIC  
CONFERENCE

February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023

HB 661  
Workgroup to Study Reentry

House Judiciary Committee

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

House Bill 661 establishes the Workgroup to Study Reentry staffed by the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services (GOCPYVS). The workgroup must (1) study the current role of State and local agencies in the reentry of formerly incarcerated individuals after completing their terms of confinement in State and local correctional facilities and (2) make recommendations regarding policy changes for improvement of reentry in the State. A workgroup member may not receive compensation but is entitled to reimbursement for expenses.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops recently issued a letter to the Congressional House Judiciary Committee stating *"Unfortunately, too few of those who return to our communities from prison or jail are prepared for their release or receive any supportive services beyond a bus ticket and a few days' spending money. One-third of all corrections departments provide no funds whatsoever to prisoners upon release. In addition, many of those leaving jail and prison suffer from chronic health problems, have no housing, little education or job training, and generally lack the supportive services needed for a successful re-entry. As a result, sixty-seven percent of persons released from state prisons were arrested for new crimes within the first three years after release, according to a 2002 study by the Justice Department."*

Additionally, the Conference firmly supports restorative justice practices. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has stated that *"People must be held accountable for their actions, but justice and restoration must be the object of punishment which must have a constructive and reformative purpose"* (*Restorative Justice: Healing and Transformation of Persons, Families and Communities*, USCCB, 2015).

The Conference appreciates your consideration and respectfully urges a **favorable** report for House Bill 499.