



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 20, 2024

HB 862

Property Tax Exemption - Disabled Veterans - Service Connected Disability

House Ways & Means Committee

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) offers this testimony in support of House Bill 862. The 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 862 expands eligibility for a property tax credit for disabled veterans on their primary residences to those who have been declared by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to have a 80% nonpermanent service-connected disability resulting from blindness or any other disabling cause.

In its *Pastoral Statement on Persons with Disabilities*, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops stated "Defense of the right to life, then, implies the defense of other rights that enable the disabled individual to achieve the fullest measure of personal development of which he or she is capable. These include the right to equal opportunity in education, in employment, in housing, as well as the right to free access to public accommodations, facilities, and services."

The Catholic Church in Maryland, through its parishes, charities, hospitals and other ministries, routinely serves those struggling with physical or mental disabilities and recognizes that veterans experiencing a service-related disability can be among the most marginalized and underserved in our society. With the dramatic rise in the cost of housing in Maryland and nationwide, as well as a shortage of availability, Senate Bill 639 seeks to further the great work of this legislative body in providing primary dwelling unit property tax relief. In doing so, this bill recognizes the human dignity of disabled veterans in enabling them to further afford a home.

The MCC appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 862.

