

THE CATHOLIC VOICE

speaking for the vulnerable in Maryland's public square

February 24, 2017

Annapolis, MD

2017 General Assembly Hits Halfway Mark

Today marks the halfway point of the 90-day 2017 Maryland General Assembly. More than 2,700 bills have been introduced in the Senate and House of Delegates. The Maryland Catholic Conference weighed in on 25 bills this week, including 12 on Thursday. You can find testimony written by our lobbyists by visiting: <http://www.mdcathcon.org/2017testimony>

Many issues are important to the Maryland Catholic Conference and we encourage you to visit <http://www.mdcathcon.org/legislatorresources> to see what we are working on each week.

Nonpublic Schools Advocacy Day Set For Thursday

Approximately 1,200 nonpublic school students are expected in Annapolis for next Thursday to advocate for nonpublic schools. Last year, the General Assembly expanded educational options for low-income students through an innovative scholarship program called Broadening Options and Opportunities for Students Today (BOOST). The program helps eligible students to attend the school best fit for their educational needs by providing scholarship assistance toward attending a nonpublic school.

The primary focus of nonpublic schools Advocacy Day will be to thank legislators for the BOOST scholarship program and ask for it to continue and expand. Various officials and legislators will address the group and students will visit the Senate and House Chambers and view legislative session.



In the 2016 legislative session, the Maryland legislature expanded educational options for low-income students through the bipartisan passage of the Broadening Options and Opportunities for Students Today (BOOST).

The program provides low-income students with scholarships, enabling them to attend the school best fit for their educational needs. See below to find out more about how the BOOST Advisory Board, with the assistance of the State Department of Education, awarded scholarships to certified applicants.



Maryland's 1st opportunity scholarship program at a glance...



Urge your legislators to support the Trust Act

The Maryland Law Enforcement and Governmental Trust Act (SB 835) was heard in the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee this past Tuesday, February 21. The Trust Act will be heard in the House (HB 1362) on February 28 at 1 p.m. in the House Judiciary Committee.

The Maryland Catholic Conference supports The Trust Act and our immigrant communities throughout the state. The Trust Act does not alter the criminal justice system from running its normal course, nor does it defend any criminal activity. Rather, it defines state and local police involvement in federal civil immigration enforcement activities, and seeks to restore trust between immigrant communities and local and state police.

Please ask your state legislators to support the Maryland Law Enforcement and Governmental Trust Act SB 835/HB1362. [Sign up HERE for our CAN network](#) to receive alerts about The Trust Act and reach out to your legislators.

Sign the Petition to STOP Assisted-Suicide

The Senate version of physician-assisted suicide legislation (SB 354) will be heard in the Judicial Proceedings committee on Tuesday, March 7. Last week, a joint House committee listened to more than seven hours of testimony on House bill 370.

Funded by out-of-state, multi-million dollar entity Compassion & Choices, the bill is identical to the failed proposals in 2015 and 2016. The legislation would allow doctors to prescribe lethal drugs to terminally ill patients who want to end their lives.

The Maryland Catholic Conference is part of the [Maryland Against Physician Assisted Suicide coalition](#), a diverse group of healthcare professionals, disability rights advocates, mental health professionals, advocates for Seniors, and members of faith communities in opposition to the legislation.

With only weeks to go, we must tell legislators to say NO to PAS. Take action in opposing SB 354 and HB 370 by signing an online petition at <http://stopassistedsuicidemd.org/sign-our-petition/>. Your help does make a difference.

Because We Are Catholic

Each week during the General Assembly's Legislative Session, the Conference produces a short feature on the good things happening in the Church in the state of Maryland. This week's story features a Catholic Charities program that has been serving and supporting those in need for 40 years: <http://bit.ly/2mbeLnd>