

THE CATHOLIC VOICE

speaking for the vulnerable in Maryland's public square

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Annapolis, MD

General Assembly Roundup

Senate Passes Paid Sick Leave Bill

The Maryland Healthy Working Families Act cleared a major hurdle Thursday when the Senate passed SB 230 by a vote of 29-18. The Healthy Working Families Act would require businesses with 15 or more workers to provide paid sick leave. The House of Delegates passed its version (HB 1) two weeks ago by a vote of 88-51.

The Senate version requires companies to provide five days of sick leave. The House version requires seven. The two chambers will have to work out those differences and vote again before sending the bill to Gov. Larry Hogan. Both are veto-proof margins. [WYPR provides an overview and analysis of the vote HERE.](#)

Currently more than 750,000 Marylanders do not have a single paid sick day, including many who live in fear they could lose their job if they get sick. Earned sick and safe leave improves public health, saves businesses as much as \$132 million each year - largely from reduced turnover - helps provide financial security for families to meet basic needs, and allows victims of domestic violence, stalking, or sexual assault better access the services they need without the threat of losing their jobs.

BOOST Update

There was also positive news regarding the Broadening Options and Opportunities for Students Today (BOOST) program. On Thursday afternoon, the Senate Budget and Taxation committee restored the proposed \$7 million in funding six days after the House of Delegates Appropriations committee voted to cut it to \$2 million.

Last year, the General Assembly expanded educational options for low-income students, who qualify for free and reduced price lunch, to attend the school best fit for their educational needs by providing scholarship assistance toward attending a nonpublic school. The program is helping nearly 2,500 students this year.

Public school students received 46 percent of the total scholarship assistance and received much higher scholarship amounts than their counterparts who already attended a nonpublic school in 2015-16. Students coming from public school were offered scholarships totaling \$2.25 million of the \$4.85 million in total scholarships.

Students from 44 of the 47 legislative districts and 20 of the 24 counties (including Baltimore City) accepted BOOST scholarships.

Pope Francis Anniversary

Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio became the 266th Pope of the Roman Catholic Church on March 13, 2013. Monday marked the fourth anniversary of Pope Francis, who made his first visit to the United States a year and a half ago in Washington D.C., New York, and Philadelphia.



(Cardinal Wuerl [left] and Pope Francis during the 2015 Papal Visit. PHOTO CREDIT: Photo by Paul Fetters, courtesy of Archdiocese of Washington)

Catholic University has a detailed look at the pontiff's historic visit to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception on its campus in September 2015. [View Catholic University's video of the visit HERE.](#)

Women's History Month



In celebration of Women's History Month in March, the Conference is honoring the women of the Church by sharing a new story every week of inspiring female figures. We begin this celebration by honoring the foundress of The Oblate Sisters of Providence, the first successful Roman Catholic sisterhood in the world established by a woman of African descent, Mother Mary Lange.

After arriving in Baltimore in 1818, Elizabeth Lange and her friend Maria Balas began teaching African and Caribbean children in their Fells Point home. Ten years later the two accepted a proposal from Archbishop James Whitfield to begin a sisterhood and open a Catholic school for girls in their convent, which is now known as St. Frances Academy. It is the oldest continuously operating, predominantly African-American Catholic high school in the United States.

In 2005, three Baltimore parochial schools (St. Dominic, Shrine of the Little Flower and St. Anthony of Padua) were combined into Mother Mary Lange Catholic School, thus becoming the first school named after her in the United States.

Mother Mary Lange died on February 3, 1882 at Saint Frances Convent in Baltimore.

In 1991, Cardinal William Keeler received permission from Rome to officially open a formal investigation into the life and works of Mother Mary Lange, the first step to canonization. That process still continues. [Learn more about the effort to canonize Mother Mary Lange HERE.](#)

St. Patrick's Day

Today is St. Patrick's Day. On March 17, Irish and Irish Americans commemorate the death of Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, who died on this date around 492.

What began as a religious feast day in the 17th century has evolved into festivals celebrating Irish culture with parades, music, and a whole lot of green. [WTOP Radio provides some fun facts on the holiday HERE.](#)

Because We Are Catholic

During the General Assembly's Legislative Session, the Conference produces a short feature not he good things happening in the Church in the state of Maryland. This week's story highlights a Harford County parish celebrating a milestone: <http://bit.ly/2nirIYV>