

CATHOLIC CHARITIES BALTIMORE
CHERISHING THE DIVINE WITHIN ALL



2025 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

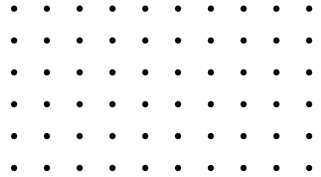


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MEET OUR ADVOCACY TEAM



Val Twanmoh

Val Twanmoh came back to Catholic Charities as the Senior Advisor for Advocacy and Policy in July of 2024 following nine years as the director of the Esperanza Center. She brings with her 25 years of experience as a trial lawyer, hearing examiner and People's Counsel, followed by several years of service in the Baltimore office of U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulski.

Madelin Martinez joined Catholic Charities as the Assistant Director of Advocacy in the Fall of 2024, after serving as the director of the Maryland Latino Legislative Caucus. That role, and her past experience in public health and human services, combined with a passion for championing inclusivity, helps ensure that the voices of those we serve are heard and valued in the legislative arena.



Madelin Martinez



ROLE OF ADVOCACY WITHIN CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF BALTIMORE

The Advocacy Team plays a vital role in raising awareness of the challenges faced by the individuals and families we serve. Our staff works closely with state and local policymakers, as well as the broader community, often facilitating direct engagement between them and those impacted.



1/29/25 Catholic Charities of Baltimore Advocacy Day



1/8/25 Madelin Martinez, Assistant Director of Advocacy, engaged in a conversation with Governor Wes Moore.

To strengthen our impact, we partner with a broad network of organizations to develop and advance advocacy strategies that drive meaningful, lasting change. We also use data-driven storytelling to deepen elected official's understanding of social justice issues, grounding policy discussions in the real-life experiences of those we serve.

ADVOCACY STATEMENTS

Catholic Charities legislative agenda centers around our six areas of focus:

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ACHIEVING INDEPENDENCE

We advocate for all Marylanders to live independently. In 2025, we focused on advancing policies that remove barriers and expand opportunities for people with disabilities to live, work, and thrive in their communities. Our efforts included supporting legislation to improve employment outcomes, enhance access to assistive technology and transportation, and increase recognition and support for individuals with visible and nonapparent disabilities.



AGING WITH DIGNITY

We advocate for robust, accessible services for older adults that reflect their needs and preferences for where they age, including at home, in the community, or in higher-care facilities. In 2025, we focused on legislative efforts that enhance the coordination of aging services, strengthen adult protective measures, improve outreach and connectivity for older adults, and ensure continued food support for low-income seniors.



EMPOWERING CAREERS

We advocate for policies and resources that allow all Marylanders to have accessible and meaningful education and vocational programs to increase job opportunities; and to promote policies and programs that support working Marylanders. In 2025, we supported legislation to expand workforce development opportunities, streamline professional licensure, strengthen support for essential workers, and promote transparency and equity in public employment systems.



HEALING TRAUMA AND ADDICTION

We advocate for a robust behavioral health safety-net that includes a full continuum of services. In 2025, we worked to ensure sustained access to telehealth, improved insurance coverage for behavioral health services, expanded community-based programs, and dedicated funding and oversight to better support individuals with mental health and substance use needs.



SUPPORTING FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

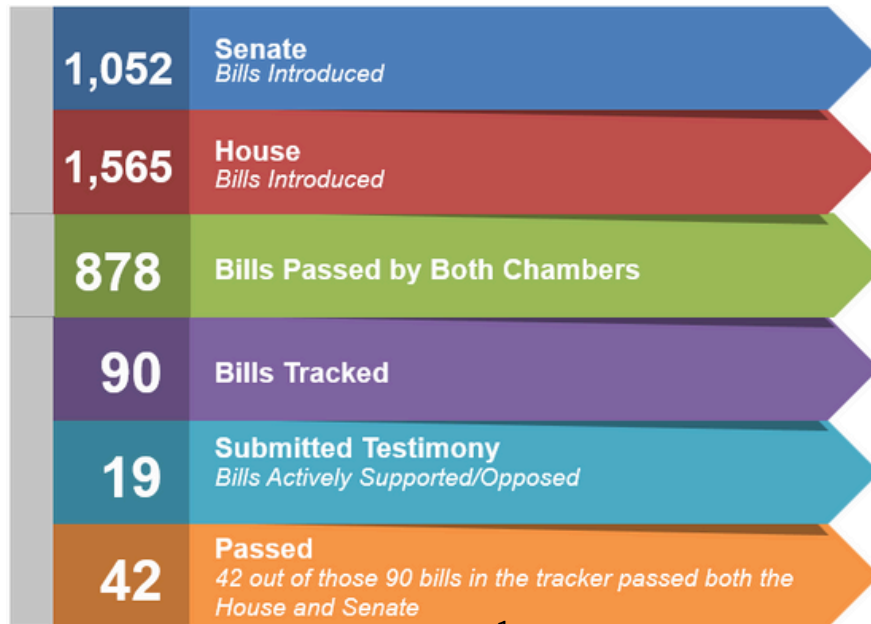
We advocate for accessible programs and comprehensive services that support the healthy development of children and youth, along with policies that strengthen families. In 2025, we advanced a working families' agenda that included legislation focused on child care, transportation, employment, housing, and family leave.



WELCOMING NEW NEIGHBORS

We advocate for the supports and resources necessary for those who have newly arrived in this country to engage with and contribute fully to our communities and in society. In 2025, we fought for policies that protect immigrant rights, ensure access to vital public services for individuals with limited English proficiency and disabilities, and strengthen legal pathways and protections for undocumented victims of crime.

OVERVIEW 2025 LEGISLATIVE SESSION



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The 2025 Maryland General Assembly session was challenging in many ways. Legislation was proposed, changed, withdrawn, and reworked. Budget items were submitted, withdrawn, increased, then decreased. It was an unprecedented experience, reflecting the uncertainty of changes around the country. In the end, though, there were more successes than losses for our clients and the communities we serve, and for that, we are most grateful. Our Advocacy Team's efforts, together with many partner coalitions, helped to ensure the passage of several impactful bills and funding allocations, as seen in the list of topics covered during this session below.

- Budget, State Aid and Taxes
- State and Local Government
- Crimes, Corrections, and Public Safety
- Courts and Civil Proceedings
- Transportation and Motor Vehicles
- Health and Human Services
- Natural Resources, Environment, and Agriculture
- Education

COALITION PARTNERS

Collaborating with various coalitions is integral to Catholic Charities' advocacy efforts, as it amplifies our collective voice and enhances the impact of our initiatives. Through strategic partnerships and alliances, we can effectively address complex social issues and advocate for meaningful change on behalf of the communities we serve. As a member of several advocacy coalitions, Catholic Charities leverages shared resources, expertise, and networks to advance our mission of promoting social justice and serving those in need. Together, we strive to create a more just and equitable society for all.





Bills Passed

ACHIEVING INDEPENDENCE

House Bill 502: [Office of Disability Employment Advancement](#)

This bill establishes the Office of Disability Employment Advancement and Policy (ODEAP) and creates the Maryland as a Model Employer Initiative, aimed at improving outcomes for people with disabilities in the state government workforce. Beginning in fiscal 2027, the Governor may include in the annual budget bill an appropriation of \$250,000 for ODEAP.

House Bill 31: [Right to Repair Powered Wheelchairs](#)

This bill makes it easier for people to fix powered wheelchairs. It requires manufacturers to make available repair documentation, parts, software, and tools to independent repair providers and wheelchair owners on fair and reasonable terms. It aims to give people more options for repairing their powered wheelchairs beyond just authorized repair providers.

House Bill 450: [Permanent Renewal for Disability Reduced Fare Program](#)

This bill requires the Maryland Transit Administration to automatically renew the Disability Reduced Fare Program certification of an enrollee who is permanently disabled.

House Bill 214/ Senate Bill 208: [Maryland Assistive Technology Program](#)

This bill establishes the Maryland Assistive Technology Program within the Department of Disabilities to help individuals with disabilities access technology devices and services that can improve their functional capabilities. The bill also creates a special Assistive Technology Services Fund to support the program's operations, including purchasing assistive technology devices, providing assessments, and training.

House Bill 384/ Senate Bill 157: [Maryland Disability Service Animal Program](#)

This bill establishes the The Maryland Disability Service Animal Program, which will help residents with disabilities get trained service animals by creating a special fund and partnering with nonprofit training organizations. *Vetoed by the Governor.*

House Bill 1244: [Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration Waiver Advisory Council](#) This bill creates a council to advise the Developmental Disabilities Administration on how to improve the design, delivery, and quality of its Medicaid waiver programs.

House Bill 707/Senate Bill 618: [Eric's ID Law](#)

This bill allows individuals to request a "nonapparent disability" notation—such as for developmental or intellectual disabilities—on their driver's license, ID card, or moped permit. The MVA must include the notation on the document, conduct outreach about its availability, and cannot charge a fee for it. Additionally, police training must be updated to address interactions with individuals who have this notation.



Bills Passed

AGING WITH DIGNITY

House Bill 36/ Senate Bill 212: [Department of Aging Program Consolidation](#)

This bill consolidated several aging services programs and responsibilities within the Department of Aging to improve efficiency and enhancement of services for older adults. Amendments included requirements that individuals receive personalized assessments and transition plans that maintain appropriate care.

House Bill 246/ Senate Bill 205: [Adult Protective Services](#)

This bill allows certain information about adult protective services cases to be shared when needed, even if it would normally be kept private. It also adds emergency medical workers to the list of people required to report suspected abuse and lets those required to report do so by calling a statewide hotline.

House Bill 158/ Senate Bill 223: [Senior Call-Check and Social Connections Program](#)

This bill creates the Senior Call-Check and Social Connections Program, which will help older adults in Maryland stay safe and connected. People 60 and older can sign up to get a daily check-in by phone, text, video, or other methods. If they don't respond, the program can contact someone they've chosen—like a family member or local agency—to check on them. The program also shares helpful information and works with other state programs to promote access to communication tools.

House Bill 542/ Senate Bill 347: [Investigations and Disclosure of Information: Adult Protective Services](#)

This bill allows local social services departments to ask for help from federal law enforcement when investigating cases involving vulnerable adults. It also updates confidentiality rules to include adult protective services (APS).

House Bill 538/ Senate Bill 445: [Federal Commodity Supplemental Food Program](#)

This bill shifts responsibility for managing the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, also known as "My Groceries to Go!," from the Maryland Department of Aging to the Department of Human Services.



Bills Passed

EMPOWERING CAREERS

House Bill 367/ Senate Bill 72 Health Occupations Boards – English Proficiency Requirements and Licensure by Endorsement for Nursing

This bill prohibits a health occupations board from requiring additional evidence of English proficiency as a condition for licensure, certification, or registration if the applicant has already passed the license and English proficiency requirements in another state.

House Bill 345/ Senate Bill 174: Interstate Social Work Licensure Compact

This bill enters Maryland into the Social Work Licensure Compact, allowing social workers with multistate licenses to practice across member states. The Compact aims to increase the number of licensed social workers in Maryland.

Senate Bill 431: RAISE Act

This bill establishes the Maryland Office of Registered Apprenticeship Development to expand and support apprenticeships statewide and creates an Advisory Board to advise on strategy and outcomes.

House Bill 19: Services Building Opportunities for Nurses Act of 2025

This bill expands the Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Nurses to include nurses working in for-profit settings in areas with healthcare workforce shortages, and extends important nursing regulations until 2030, including nursing license requirements and tax credits for nurse preceptors who train new nurses. These extensions ensure continuity in nursing oversight, education requirements, and incentives for clinical training supervision.

House Bill 745: State Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists – Behavior Analysts – Licensure Applications

This bill requires the State Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists to issue a behavior analyst license within 30 days of receiving a complete application, or within 50 days if more information is needed. The board must send email updates throughout the application process and provide additional notifications if requested.

House Bill 850/Senate Bill 3: Workgroup on the Creation of a Data Dashboard for Public Work Contracts and Apprentices – Establishment

This bill establishes the Workgroup on the Creation of a Data Dashboard for Public Work Contracts and Apprentices to study and make recommendations regarding the most efficient and cost-effective method to create a publicly available dashboard that disaggregates information regarding public work contracts with the State.



HEALING TRAUMA AND ADDICTION

House Bill 869/Senate Bill 372: [Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2025](#)

This bill extends and makes permanent reimbursement for health care services provided via telehealth, thereby ensuring continued access to these services.

House Bill 11/Senate Bill 902: [Access to Nonparticipating Providers – Referrals, Additional Assistance, and Coverage](#) This bill makes permanent a rule that lets people see medical specialists—even if those specialists aren’t part of their insurance company’s network—when needed. It also makes sure insurance companies help patients find and get appointments with out-of-network specialists for mental health or substance use treatment. Finally, it prevents insurance companies from creating extra hoops to jump through (like extra approvals) just because the provider isn’t in their network, if the treatment would normally be covered.

House Bill 94/Senate Bill 224: [Opioid-Associated Disease Prevention and Outreach Programs – Appeals and Membership of Standing Advisory Committee](#)

This bill makes it easier for local health departments or community organizations to appeal if their application to run an Opioid-Associated Disease Prevention and Outreach Program is denied. Instead of appealing to a deputy secretary, they can now appeal directly to the Secretary of Health or the Secretary’s chosen representative. The bill also changes the makeup of the advisory committee that helps guide and support these opioid-related programs.

House Bill 421/Senate Bill 36: [9-1-1 Trust Fund – 9-8-8 Suicide Prevention Hotline](#)

This bill allows the 9-1-1 Trust Fund to also cover shared costs with the 9-8-8 suicide prevention hotline, such as joint training and shared technology. It helps the two systems work together more efficiently and avoids duplicate spending.

House Bill 185/Senate Bill 359: [Therapeutic Child Care Grant Program Funding Alterations](#)

This bill restores the requirement for the Governor to include \$3.7 million each year from 2027 to 2029 in the state budget for the Therapeutic Child Care Grant Program, which supports providers serving children under age six with developmental delays, disabilities, or behavioral challenges.

House Bill 1066: [Commission on Behavioral Health Care Treatment and Access – Workgroups](#)

This bill directs the Commission on Behavioral Health Care Treatment and Access to create a workgroup focused on improving outcomes related to substance use. The group will review patient discharge standards and recommend changes to laws and policies aimed at reducing the harms of criminalizing substance use and ensuring appropriate discharge planning based on a patient’s mental health or substance use disorder.



Bills Passed

SUPPORTING FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

[Senate Bill 154: Access to Counsel in Evictions – Task Force Termination and Special Fund](#)

This bill extends the Governor's required annual appropriation of \$14 million from the Access to Counsel in Evictions Special Fund to the Maryland Legal Services Corporation through 2028, to support legal representation for tenants facing eviction. It also updates the structure and responsibilities of the Access to Counsel in Evictions Task Force. The bill also allows low-income tenant members to receive reasonable compensation for their service, whereas previously all members were only eligible for reimbursement of travel expenses.

[House Bill 681: Child Support – Driver's License Suspension for Arrearages and Court Orders](#)

This bill changes the rules for suspending someone's driver's license when they fall behind on child support. Now, a license—commercial or regular—can only be suspended if the person is at least 120 days behind. People who earn less than 250% of the federal poverty level are protected from suspension, unless a judge says they are not paying on purpose. The bill also makes sure that courts send child support orders and payment details to the Child Support Administration after they're made.

[House Bill 150/Senate Bill 252: Child Care Centers – Certificated Staff Ratio Requirement – Alteration](#)

This bill changes the rules for how many childcare staff members must be certified in first aid and CPR at centers with 20 or more children. Instead of a fixed number, the required number of certified staff will now follow a ratio set by the Department, depending on the situation.

[House Bill 268/Senate Bill 981: Hospitals – Financial Assistance and Collection of Debts – Policies](#)

This legislation strengthens patients' rights regarding hospital bills by expanding financial assistance eligibility, capping monthly payment amounts based on income, and prohibiting hospitals from filing lawsuits for debts under \$500. It also gives patients more time (240 days instead of 180) to apply for financial assistance, prevents hospitals from charging interest before court judgments, and requires clear documentation that patients were informed of available financial assistance options.

[House Bill 334/Senate Bill 156: Workgroup on Newborn Home Visiting Services – Establishment](#)

This bill creates a workgroup to study nurse home visiting programs for families with newborns. The group will review current data, compare it to national models, identify service gaps and funding options, and recommend ways to strengthen the workforce.



Bills Passed

SUPPORTING FAMILIES AND CHILDREN (CONT'D)

House Bill 1020: Fair Medical Debt Reporting Act This bill bans credit reporting agencies from including medical debt in credit reports and prohibits using medical debt to judge someone's creditworthiness. It also stops medical providers from reporting medical debt to credit agencies and requires contracts with debt collectors to include the same ban. Any contract that doesn't include this is void. Hospitals must also ask credit agencies to delete past negative reports related to medical debt by November 1, 2025.

Senate Bill 785: Labor and Employment – Unpaid Parental Leave – Definition of Employer This bill updates the Maryland Parental Leave Act so that employers already covered by the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) don't have to follow the state's separate parental leave requirements.

House Bill 809/Senate Bill 765: Out-of-Home Placement Providers – Individuals Enrolled in Higher Education and Vocational Training Programs This bill allows young adults in college or vocational training to temporarily return to their former foster care placement during school breaks. They must request this at least 30 days in advance, and the local department and DHS must review and decide on the request before the break begins.

House Bill 767: Real Property – Landlord and Tenant – Procedures for Failure to Pay Rent, Breach of Lease, and Tenant Holding Over This bill adds new requirements for landlords after a court issues a warrant of restitution in eviction cases, including rules about notifying tenants and handling their belongings. It also gives tenants the right to seek civil remedies if landlords violate these rules. The bill only applies to cases filed after its effective date.

House Bill 1503: State Personnel – Paid Family and Medical Leave

This bill replaces the current paid parental leave program for Executive Branch employees with a broader paid family and medical leave (PFML) program that aligns with the state's FAMLI Program. It covers all Executive Branch employees, including temporary workers, and requires the Secretary of Budget and Management to set rules for how leave can be requested and approved.

Bill we opposed through coalition that passed

House Bill 102: Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Revisions

This bill delays the start of Maryland's Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI) Program by 18 months to January 1, 2027, for required contributions, and by at least six months to a date that is between January 1, 2027, and January 3, 2028, as determined and announced by the Secretary of Labor, for benefit payments. It also updates certain definitions, rules, and administrative procedures, and delays self-employed individuals' ability to opt in until regulations are adopted by July 1, 2028.



Bills Passed

WELCOMING NEW NEIGHBORS

House Bill 1222: [Maryland Values Act](#)

This bill is a combined version of three immigration-related bills. The final bill primarily requires ICE to notify local law enforcement before conducting actions at “sensitive locations” (like schools, libraries, courts, and health facilities) and restricts access to such locations without a warrant. It also directs the Attorney General to issue guidance on enforcement practices at these and other locations and prevents the sale of residents’ personal data.

House Bill 1473: [Equal Access to Public Services for Individuals With Limited English Proficiency and Individuals With Disabilities](#)

This bill establishes the Maryland Language Advisory Group to provide recommendations on oversight, monitoring, investigation, and enforcement of certain provisions of law relating to equal access to public services for individuals with limited English proficiency and individuals with disabilities.

Senate Bill 608: [Criminal Procedure – U Nonimmigrant Status Petitions](#)

This bill updates Maryland’s process for supporting U Visa applications for undocumented crime victims. It allows a victim’s attorney or advocate to request certification, prevents officials from denying certification just because the crime happened a long time ago, and requires written explanations if certification is denied. It also assumes a victim is helpful to law-enforcement unless they have clearly refused to cooperate.

House Bill 325/Senate Bill 451: [High School Diploma by Examination – Requirements and Study](#)

This bill requires the Maryland Department of Labor to allow an individual to choose to take all components of the GED exam in either English or Spanish. It also requires the department to conduct a cost and feasibility study to offer the GED in additional languages.

NON-PROFIT ADMINISTRATION

House Bill 541/Senate Bill 365: [Department of Commerce – Nonprofit Organizations Navigator – Established](#) This bill establishes a nonprofit organizations navigator within the Department of Commerce to help resolve complexities and delays in the State grant-making processes, collect and share certain information, and represent nonprofits interests and concerns as a member of the Maryland Efficient Grant Application Council.

House Bill 300/Senate Bill 127: [State Government – Grants and Contracts – Reimbursement of Indirect Costs](#) This bill adjusts the reimbursement rate for indirect costs incurred by nonprofit organizations receiving state-funded grants or contracts, allowing them to be reimbursed at either their federally approved rate or a flat rate of 15%.

Senate Bill 550: [Baltimore City – Property Tax – Authority to Impose on Vacant and Abandoned Property Owned by Nonprofit Organizations](#) This bill allows Baltimore City to create a special property tax category for nonprofit-owned properties that have been vacant and unimproved for at least five years. The city can define what counts as a "significant improvement" and set a special tax rate for these properties – tax rate may not exceed 10 times the city's real property tax rate.

BUDGET

Along with working on legislation, the Advocacy Team's primary focus was on the state budget—because how money gets spent really matters. It affects what programs grow, what gets cut, and who gets left out.

This year's budget process was especially intense. It wasn't business as usual. In fact, the budget dominated the entire session and shaped what legislation could realistically move forward. The relationship between the Governor and the General Assembly was tested in ways we haven't seen in recent years, with challenging negotiations and a clear urgency around addressing the state's fiscal deficit.

Despite the difficult fiscal landscape, we were able to secure key wins:

- \$2 million for our Intergenerational Center project was approved in the Capital Budget, with a commitment for potential additional funding next year.
- Our long-standing grant in the Operating Budget for community services programs was successfully included for Fiscal Year 2026.
- Service provider rates—critical to the sustainability of our behavioral health, developmental disability, and senior services—did not receive the proposed 1% increase, but were maintained at current rates for now. With potential federal cuts looming later this year, this is an area we'll need to watch closely.

The Big Picture

The approved budget closes a \$2.8 billion deficit through a combination of:

- \$1.6 billion in spending cuts
- \$1.2 billion in new taxes and fees

These are significant changes, and they signal that the next few years will be financially challenging for providers, advocates, and the communities we serve.