

MCC supports criminal reporting bill

Mary Ellen Russell, deputy directory for education and family life with the Maryland Catholic Conference, called on state lawmakers to pass a bill that would require nonpublic school administrators to be informed when one of their students has been arrested for a violent or sexual crime and when such a student from another school transfers to their school.

Testifying Feb. 13 before the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee in favor of Senate Bill 495, Ms. Russell pointed out that the same reporting requirements already exist in public schools.

“This legislation provides a critically important measure to the nonpublic school community to ensure a safe environment for their students, teachers and other personnel,” she said.

Ms. Russell said nonpublic schools already support and follow similar safety laws governing public schools such as performing employee criminal background checks.

“In fact, many of our child protection programs extend beyond what is required by law, as is the case with the diocesan requirement to perform background checks on all volunteers who work with students in our schools,” she said.

Ms. Russell called the proposed bill “critically important.”

“This oversight in current law is clearly inconsistent with the intent of other laws, applicable to both public and nonpublic schools, to ensure that school administrators are appropriately informed of potential dangers to their school community, whether that danger is posed by a student, employee or any other individual entering or near school property,” she said.

There are 167 Catholic schools serving 63,000 students in Maryland.