



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

February 18, 2020

**SB 511
Task Force on Oral Health in Maryland**

Senate Finance Committee

Position: Support

The Maryland Catholic Conference (“Conference”) represents the public-policy interests of the three Roman Catholic (arch)dioceses serving Maryland: the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Archdiocese of Washington, and the Diocese of Wilmington.

Senate Bill 511 creates a Task Force to study current access to dental services throughout the state, with a focus on poor, disabled, and aging populations, identify where in Maryland there is a lack of or disparate availability of oral health care services, identify barriers to accessing oral health care services, find options to eliminate those barriers, and make recommendations to increase access to oral health care overall.

The Catholic Church has a strong interest in ensuring access to quality, affordable, and life-giving health care for all. As such, the Conference supports expanding access to health care options for those who need it, as every person has a basic right to adequate health care arising from the Church’s teaching on the sanctity and dignity of human life.

Senate Bill 511 aims to achieve this lofty goal in Maryland. Dental care is an important part of an individual’s overall physical health, and providing it for those who are less likely to be able to afford it is central to maintaining a person’s wellbeing and advancing their health. It also closes a crucial gap for those who are unable to afford dental services, most often the vulnerable and poverty-stricken in our communities. Providing even limited dental coverage will not only improve overall health, but also open doors by way of job opportunities and other societal benefits.

The Conference appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, urges you to support Senate Bill 511.