



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

March 11, 2022

**House Bill 50
Public Health – Abortion, Artificial Insemination, and Sterilization –
Requirement**

House Health and Government Operations Committee

Position: OPPOSE

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in OPPOSITION to House Bill 50. The Catholic Conference represents the public policy interests of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland: the Archdioceses of Baltimore and Washington and the Diocese of Wilmington, which together encompass over one million Marylanders.

As an important conscience protection measure, Maryland law currently exempts a person from being required to perform, participate in, or refer anyone for an abortion, artificial insemination or sterilization against their will. It also provides those who refuse the same protection from civil liability or disciplinary action. Additionally, current law also puts forth the same conscience protection exemptions for licensed hospitals, hospital directors, or hospital governing boards.

House Bill 50 seeks not only to remove the aforementioned exemption for hospitals, hospital directors, or hospital governing boards, but also to compel them to authorize a hospital to perform abortions, sterilizations and artificial inseminations. Moreover, it removes civil liability and disciplinary action protections.

Many of Maryland's hospitals are nonprofit, faith-based organizations, such as the several Catholic hospitals that have served Marylanders for generations. These faith-based hospitals are founded on the tenets of their respective faiths and those organizations must be afforded the right to object to certain procedures where the procedure is antithetical to those faith tenets.

The exemptions House Bill 50 seeks to remove from law were put there by the General Assembly to reinforce constitutionally protected rights, rights which have been recently reinforced by our federal courts multiple times over. Therefore, we urge an unfavorable report on House Bill 50.