



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 14, 2023

House Bill 477

**Public Senior Higher Education Institutions – Reproductive Health Services Plans
– Requirements**

House Appropriations Committee

Position: Unfavorable

The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state’s second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

House Bill 477 requires that on or before August 1, 2024, each public senior higher education institution, in consultation with students, shall develop and implement a reproductive health services plan to provide at the institution or to refer students to various reproductive health services. It calls for the Maryland Department of Health, on request, to provide assistance to a public senior higher education institution in developing a reproductive health services plan.

House Bill 477 specifically says it will develop and implement a reproductive health services plan to provide at public senior higher education institutions or will refer students to a comprehensive range of reproductive health services. Unfortunately, the bill does not explicitly provide any resources or referrals for students who decide to have and parent a child. In Maryland, 18 percent of all undergraduates, or 54,908 students, are parents and 25,955 college students are single mothers.¹ We must provide student mothers, and/or mothers to be, resources and referrals that allow them the choice to have and parent a child. Too often a student mother, and/or mother to be is forced to choose between her child and her dreams for educational attainment. We cannot let this be the case.

There is a great need to provide students with resources and referrals that reflect their choice to have a child and parent that child. Students deserve more options than abortion.

¹ <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Maryland.pdf>

The Maryland Catholic Conference asks for an unfavorable report on HB 477.

Thank you for your consideration.