



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

March 13th, 2023

HB 317
Overdose Awareness Day

House Health & Government Operations Committee

Position: Favorable

The Maryland 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 317 requires the Governor annually to proclaim August 31st as Overdose Awareness Day.

Behavioral health issues, including substance use disorders, are public health challenges that causes immeasurable pain among individuals, families, and communities across the country. House Bill 317 seeks to shed the light on an issue that our most vulnerable populations are facing due to the opioid epidemic.

The Catholic Church through its parishes, charities and other ministries reaches out pastorally to those struggling with mental illness. Because the Catholic faith embraces an integrated view of the human person as both corporeal and spiritual, we welcome the sciences as one pathway to knowledge of the human person. Pope St. John Paul II said "*Whoever suffers from mental illness always bears God's image and likeness in themselves, as does every human being. In addition, they always have the inalienable right not only to be considered as an image of God and therefore as a person, but also to be treated as such.*"

The Conference appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a **favorable** report on House Bill 317.

