



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

March 15, 2024

House Bill 1216

**High-Risk Pregnancy Reimbursement Fund – Establishment
House Health and Government Operations Committee**

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) 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 1216 establishes the High-Risk Pregnancy Reimbursement Fund as a special, nonlapsing fund to provide reimbursement to individuals for unforeseen out-of-pocket costs for the individual's high-risk pregnancy; authorizing an individual to apply for reimbursement from the Fund if the individual provides certain documentation and applies for reimbursement within a certain time period; and limiting the amount of reimbursement from the Fund to no more than \$25,000.

This bill allows for high costs related to necessary care for a high-risk pregnancy that was not covered by insurance to be reimbursed six months after the birth of a child. High risk pregnancies carry higher associated costs because increasing frequency of costly visits to healthcare providers is necessary. Women of color are disproportionately affected by low maternal outcomes, with the maternal mortality rate (MMR) among Black women being 4 times higher than that of White women.¹ Maryland lags significantly in maternal-fetal medicine and improving health outcomes for women and children in the state requires increased resources. High-risk pregnancies can lead to conditions such as gestational diabetes, hypertension, and eclampsia, with nearly two-thirds of severe maternal morbidity (SMM) events being preventable. Recognizing the importance of timely assessment, screening, vital sign monitoring, and follow-up on abnormal tests, recommendations aim to reduce preventable SMM events.² Cost may prevent the necessary treatments of being obtained for women with high-risk pregnancies.

¹ <https://mchb.tvisdata.hrsa.gov/Narratives/View/IIBFiveYearNeedsAssessmentSummary/MD/2022>

² <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2799025>

The Catholic Conference is dedicated to ensuring the safety of mothers and babies. Recognizing that labor and delivery can be costly, the bill introduces additional support to minimize the economic hardships that may arise after childbirth.

For these reasons, the MCC asks for a favorable report on **HB 1216**.

Thank you for your consideration.