



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

March 15, 2024

House Bill 858
Health – Abortion – Ultrasound and Waiting Period
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 858 prohibits a qualified provider from performing or inducing an abortion on a pregnant woman within a certain period of time after the woman receives certain ultrasound imaging; establishing certain requirements related to the performance of a certain transabdominal ultrasound; and providing that a woman is not required to accept anything offered during certain transabdominal ultrasound imaging.

Ensuring that a woman has the opportunity to view an ultrasound image, hear the fetal heartbeat, and take time to consider this information is an essential step for making an informed decision. Ultrasounds play a crucial role in determining the gestational age of the baby, providing relevant and necessary information for women. It is crucial to afford women the right to receive basic, medically appropriate information and the time needed to assess their options during pregnancy.

Denying women access to ultrasound images or preventing them from hearing the fetal heartbeat would deprive them of vital information, hindering their ability to make a fully informed decision regarding abortion. Protecting human life is paramount, and providing medically necessary information is crucial, especially when faced with life-and-death decisions involving a vulnerable and developing baby.

For these reasons, the MCC asks for a favorable report on **HB 858**.

Thank you for your consideration.