



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

March 14, 2024

Senate Bill 1059

Maternal Health – Assessments, Referrals, and Reporting (Maryland Maternal Health Act of 2024)

Senate Finance 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.

Senate Bill 1059 establishes requirements on local health departments and certain health care providers and facilities regarding maternal health, including requirements regarding prenatal risk assessment forms and postpartum infant and maternal referral forms; prohibiting the Maryland Department of Health from providing Medical Assistance Program reimbursement to a hospital or freestanding birthing center unless the facility complies with certain provisions of the Act.

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, particularly for postpartum complications. 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

While the identification and treatment of postpartum depression have improved over the years, many mothers may not experience symptoms until months after delivery. It is crucial to widely disseminate resources, especially for high-risk pregnancies, through the implementation

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

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

of patient forms and referrals. The Catholic Conference is dedicated to ensuring the safety of mothers and babies. Recognizing that labor and delivery can be traumatic events, the bill introduces additional support systems to minimize the hardships that may arise after childbirth, offering resources on caring for a new infant and addressing the psychiatric and physical well-being of the mother.

For these reasons, the MCC asks for a favorable report on **SB 1059**.

Thank you for your consideration.