



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 22, 2024

House Bill 1043

**Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance - Individuals With
Intellectual Disabilities – Study
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 1043 requires the Maryland Department of Health and the Maryland Insurance Administration jointly to conduct a study of Maryland Medical Assistance Program and commercial health insurance coverage to measure the number and percentage of individuals who have been denied health coverage for the treatment of an intellectual disability from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2025, both inclusive; and requiring the Department and the Administration to jointly report their findings to the Governor and the General Assembly by December 1, 2025.

People with intellectual disabilities encounter numerous societal barriers, and among these challenges is limited access to healthcare. Health disparities within this community stem from factors like stigma, reliance on support systems, and insufficient education. Individuals with intellectual disabilities face double the risk of developing various health conditions, including depression, asthma, diabetes, stroke, obesity, or poor oral health.¹ Compounding this, healthcare professionals may lack the necessary training in effective communication to accurately diagnose or provide appropriate care for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

The information gathered through this proposed bill will spotlight the existing gaps in care for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Reports indicate that physicians may exhibit bias against those with disabilities, perceiving their conditions as severe impairments, leading to a perceived low quality of life. The bill aims to address barriers within the current healthcare landscape of the State by fostering a better understanding of the realities faced by individuals with intellectual disabilities. Recognizing the intrinsic value of every individual and

¹ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health>

understanding the specific needs of those with intellectual disabilities becomes a crucial tool in ensuring the protection and well-being of this marginalized community.

For these reasons, the MCC asks for a favorable report on **HB 1043**.

Thank you for your consideration.