

Maryland Catholic Conference_FAV_SB414.pdf

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Position: FAV



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 5, 2025

Senate Bill 414
Income Tax Credit - Parent of Stillborn Child
Senate Budget and Taxation 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 414 allows a parent of a stillborn child a refundable credit of \$1,000 against the State income tax for each birth for which a certain certificate of birth resulting in stillbirth or a certificate of fetal death has been issued; and applying the Act to taxable years beginning after December 31, 2025.

For Maryland families, 1 in every 144 pregnancies ends in stillbirth, and families are 6.5 times more likely to lose a baby to stillbirth than to SIDS.¹ Grieving a stillbirth is a unique and devastating loss, as parents return home with empty arms. Beyond the emotional toll, stillbirth also imposes a significant financial burden. The costs of medical care, nursery preparations, cribs, and baby clothes remain, despite the heartbreaking outcome. Families may also face expenses for a funeral, burial, or cremation, as well as counseling to cope with their grief. Providing a \$1,000 tax credit for families who experience stillbirth can help ease the financial strain during their time of mourning. To date, eight states (Alaska, Arizona, Connecticut, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, and North Dakota) have passed stillbirth tax credits with strong bipartisan support.²

Supporting families after stillbirth is also an issue of equity. According to the CDC, stillbirth disproportionately affects Black mothers, low-income mothers, and those with higher-risk pregnancies due to pre-existing medical conditions and health disparities. In Maryland, Black

¹ <https://countthekicks.org/2023/04/maryland-launch/>

² <https://starlegacyfoundation.org/stillbirth-tax-information/>

mothers experience stillbirth at twice the rate of White and Hispanic mothers.³ Maryland currently allows families to request a Certificate of Birth Resulting in Stillbirth alongside a death certificate, providing some acknowledgment of their loss. However, at tax time, parents of stillborn babies often face additional trauma. While parents whose infants live even a brief time after birth qualify for the child tax credit, parents of stillborn children do not. These families bear the emotional and financial responsibilities of parenthood but are not recognized as parents under current tax law.

As Maryland works to address maternal and infant health disparities, providing a financial break for families who experience stillbirth would offer meaningful support. Recognizing their grief and helping alleviate the financial burden honors the inherent dignity of their loss and acknowledges their role as parents.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report on **SB 414**.

Thank you for your consideration.

³https://health.maryland.gov/vsa/Documents/Reports%20and%20Data/Infant%20Mortality/InfantMortalityAnnualReport_2021_Final.pdf#:~:text=In%202021%2C%20there%20were%20200%20deaths%20among,infants%20born%20to%20non%2D%20Hispanic%20Asian%20or

Maryland stillbirth tax credit testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Jessica Reader

Position: FAV

Testimony of Jessica Brady Reader in favor of SB 414
February 5, 2025

My name is Jessica Brady Reader. I'm a resident of Kensington, and the proud mother of three daughters. Our second daughter, Francesca, was stillborn on June 17th, 2021, after a healthy and uneventful pregnancy. We were absolutely shocked to learn in a routine checkup in the final weeks of my pregnancy that Francesca had died. Although the loss is a source of deep pain, we are tremendously proud of all of our children and our family. My desire to honor Francesca, as I promised her I would, is what brings me here today.

A Stillbirth is the death of a baby at 20 weeks or greater gestation. It's a public health crisis that impacts more than 21,000 families nationwide every single year—including roughly 450 families right here in Maryland. Stillbirth is a pregnancy outcome that is rarely talked about, leaving loss families feeling alone and searching for answers. I had never considered stillbirth in my pregnancies, and as my husband and I prepared to go to the hospital to deliver my sweet Francesca, we frantically paged through a pregnancy book to even grasp what we were facing.

Nothing could prepare us for the devastation of coming home from the hospital without our baby. And that loss, as anyone experiencing grief knows, continues. My due date with Francesca just a few weeks after her stillbirth was filled with sorrow and longing. I remember feeling so sad and out of place at a neighborhood Halloween parade a few months later, aching on the inside but desperately trying to go through the motions for our older daughter. That Christmas as we hung ornaments on the tree, I just couldn't find any joy in the season. There are so many ways, big and small, that this kind of loss affects your life.

But who would have thought that Tax Day would be a new source of grief? Sure, none of us enjoy it, but I never could have predicted it prompting a wave of grief. And yet that first tax season after Francesca died was a new pain. [Contrast here the child tax credit, and that] Of course, the child tax credit is intended to help parents with the many costs of raising healthy children. But for stillborn babies, there are still costs, and to complete your taxes without a recognition of what was lost is a new pain in an already broken heart.

And that is what it feels like to be a stillbirth parent. It is a lifetime of love that comes crashing down, and little public recognition of that experience.

In the hospital after Francesca was delivered, the hospital gave us a pamphlet with information about funeral homes. We needed to make arrangements in a matter of days and I promise you that reading the prices for the burial or cremation of your child is excruciating. If you have ever made funeral arrangements for a beloved family member, you know how hard this is. These costs, which run into the thousands for a simple casket, are on top of all the money spent in anticipation of bringing home a new baby: the bassinet, boxes of diapers, baby clothes and bottles. After Francesca died, we had new and unexpected expenses for her cremation and special mementos. I am sure this committee knows that for too many young Maryland families, a thousand dollars of unexpected expenses is crushing. So when Tax Day came, and it felt like

nothing about Francesca counted, and I was even financially penalized for my loss due to a lack of tax credit, I felt yet another low point.

Stillbirth parents are just like any parents—we are proud of our children, and we want to share them with the world. Thanks to the courageous advocacy of so many others before me, there has been some progress made to recognize stillbirth. More employers are offering leave for bereavement and recovery after stillbirth. In Maryland, state employees who experience stillbirth are entitled up to 60 days of paid leave. Maryland also offers a fetal death certificate, which is important for data collection and research. It also provides families an important and tangible memento of their child who will not receive a certificate of live birth

A one time stillbirth tax credit seems to be an obvious step to meet the needs of these vulnerable families in our state. This common sense proposal can provide modest financial support to aching families and an acknowledgement of their lost children. I am grateful to Senator Waldstreicher for bringing this issue to you, and for Congresswoman Elfreth who first introduced this bill in the Senate in 2022.

We should do more to prevent stillbirth in the first place, such as urging the Maryland Department of Health to use more federal funding for stillbirth prevention programs. And we should encourage open dialogue to allow impacted families to share their stories so that we can advance better policies. Stillbirth disproportionately impacts expectant parents of color, with Black and Hispanic parents experiencing stillbirth at twice the rate of White parents. These are not outcomes that we should accept.

My heart goes out to all of the Maryland families who have recently experienced stillbirth. Three and a half years after losing Francesca, I still carry with me a deep sense of pain but also a sense of love and purpose. I am so proud to represent my family here today, and I urge you to pass the stillbirth tax credit during this legislative session to support families that are already facing the worst times of their life.

StillbirthTaxCredit2025.pdf

Uploaded by: Lauren Cecil

Position: FAV

Previously, I spoke to this committee, which unanimously approved bill 408. Thank you to those previous members in attendance today.

July 17th, 2020, is a day I will never forget. My husband, Max, and I had been married for just over a year, and we were overjoyed as we prepared to welcome our first child that November. We had lovingly finished setting up the nursery, reviewed parenting advice, and chosen the perfect name for our baby girl: Ava Petit.

But on that day, our world was turned upside down. I contacted my physician because something felt wrong—I suspected I might be having contractions. Shortly after that call, my water broke. We rushed to Anne Arundel Medical Center, holding onto hope that things might be okay.

When we arrived, we received the devastating news no parent should ever have to hear: Ava had a 0% chance of survival because I was only 20 weeks along.

Our nightmare had just begun. We were admitted to the hospital, knowing that the worst day of our lives was ahead of us. Compassionate nurses came by to counsel us on the next steps. We were bombarded with information and forced to make rapid, heartbreaking decisions.

We had to decide what to do with Ava's remains. Could we afford a funeral? Would we want one? Would we need grief counseling? These were unimaginable choices for grieving parents to make in such a short time.

Fortunately, my husband and I had the resources to cremate our daughter and scatter her ashes beneath a beautiful white poplar tree in our yard. We placed a simple plaque there, a lasting tribute to Ava, letting her know she was real, loved, and forever in our hearts.

But not every family is as fortunate. Every year in Maryland, over 350 families face this same devastating nightmare. Many of them are forced to make impossible decisions—decisions no parent should ever have to make—because of financial constraints.

Imagine being unable to afford the burial or cremation of your child because of unexpected expenses. Imagine not being able to access the grief counseling you so desperately need because it's simply too expensive. These parents are already enduring the most heartbreaking moment of their lives; they shouldn't have to suffer even more because they lack the financial means.

I am here today, pleading with you to pass **Bill 414**. This bill would provide critical financial assistance to grieving parents, ensuring they aren't burdened with making impossible choices during the worst day of their lives.

By passing Bill 414, you can make a difference for families struggling to honor their children and cope with their loss. No parent should ever have to choose between their grief and their finances. Ava's memory—and the memory of every child lost too soon—deserves better.

Thank you for your time, compassion, and commitment to supporting Maryland families. I implore you to approve this bipartisan bill. I am also happy to answer any questions you may have, as I am well-versed in similar bills other states have passed.

You can help grieving Maryland families pick up the pieces after losing a child. Please support Senate Bill 408.

Sincerely,

Lauren Petit

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lauren Petit".

Lauren.e.cecil@gmail.com

Senate Bill 414 Final Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Giavante Hawkins

Position: UNF



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January 25, 2025

Honorable Members of the Budget and Taxation Committee
Maryland General Assembly
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Senate Bill 414 - Income Tax Credit - Parent of Stillborn Child

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Society of Accounting and Tax Professionals, Inc. (MSATP) represents the voices of over 2,000 tax and accounting professional members. Our members, who are tax and accounting professionals, serve over 700,000 Maryland residents. While we deeply sympathize with parents who experience stillbirth, we must respectfully oppose Senate Bill 414 due to significant administrative and implementation concerns.

The proposed tax credit, while well-intentioned, would create unnecessary complexity in Maryland's tax code without providing meaningful, timely support to grieving families. The \$1,000 refundable credit, which can only be claimed in the tax year of the stillbirth, would require families to wait months or potentially up to a year to receive financial assistance during a time when immediate support is crucial. This delayed relief through the tax system is not the most effective way to support families experiencing such a profound loss.

From a tax administration perspective, the verification process for these claims would be particularly challenging. The requirement for a certificate of birth resulting in stillbirth or equivalent documentation from other states would create additional administrative burden for both tax preparers and state agencies, potentially leading to delays in processing returns and creating additional stress for grieving families who must obtain and provide such documentation.

We believe that direct support services, grief counseling resources, and immediate financial assistance programs would better serve families experiencing stillbirth than a tax credit that may take months to receive. The state's resources would be better directed toward expanding existing health and family support services rather than creating a new tax credit that may not effectively address the immediate needs of affected families.

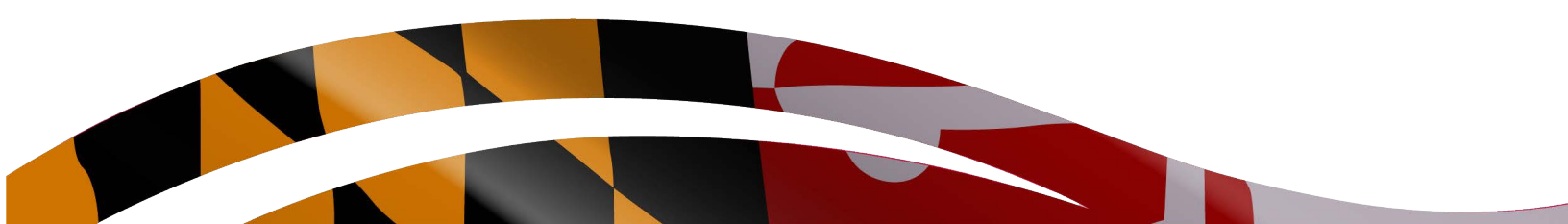
For these reasons, MSATP urges an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 414 and recommends exploring alternative approaches to supporting families experiencing stillbirth.

Respectfully submitted,

Giavante' Hawkins

Giavante' Hawkins

Maryland Society of Accounting and Tax Professionals



SB 414 - MDH - B&T - LOI.pdf

Uploaded by: Meghan Lynch

Position: INFO



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

February 5, 2025

The Honorable Guy Guzzone
Chair, Budget and Taxation Committee
3 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Senate Bill (SB) 414 – Income Tax Credit – Parent of Stillborn Child – Letter of Information

Dear Chair Guzzone and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (Department) respectfully submits this letter of information for Senate Bill (SB) 414 – Income Tax Credit – Parent of Stillborn Child. This bill seeks to allow a parent of a stillborn child a refundable credit against the State income tax for each stillbirth for which a certain certificate has been issued; and generally relating to a credit against the State income tax for the parent of a stillborn child.

The Department notes this additional information regarding the issuance of certificates of stillbirth. While these certificates are issued upon request from the parent, the Department is only able to fulfill these requests for stillbirths that are registered by the Division of Vital Records. Health General §4–213 requires that fetal death certificates be filed if a fetal death occurs after a gestation period of 20 weeks or more. As a result, fetal deaths with a gestational age less than 20 weeks are not registered unless the remains are transported for burial or cremation.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Sarah Case-Herron, Director of Governmental Affairs, at sarah.case-herron@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

Laura Herrera Scott, MD, MPH
Secretary