



March 13, 2025

House Bill 1538

Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Maternal Health Monitoring Pilot Program

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 1538 establishes the Maternal Health Monitoring Pilot Program in the Maryland Department of Health to support pregnant and postpartum Maryland Medical Assistance Program recipients who have higher risks of pregnancy complications because of maternal hypertension or maternal diabetes; requiring the Department to choose a managed care organization to administer the Program; requiring the managed care organization to contract with a technology vendor to offer remote patient monitoring services to participants in the Program.

Continuous monitoring is essential to improving maternal outcomes and upholding the dignity of life, particularly for high-risk pregnancies, which often lead to complications such as gestational diabetes, hypertension, and eclampsia. Alarming, nearly two-thirds of severe maternal morbidity (SMM) cases are preventable, underscoring the critical need for proactive care.¹ Early assessment, routine screening, vigilant monitoring of vital signs, and timely follow-ups on abnormal test results are key to reducing these incidents.

The disparity in maternal mortality rates is particularly concerning, with Black women experiencing a maternal mortality rate four times higher than that of White women.² This highlights the urgent need for increased resources in maternal-fetal medicine. Integrating remote monitoring devices—such as blood pressure monitors, blood glucose meters, and fetal dopplers—into maternal healthcare ensures real-time tracking of vital signs and fetal well-

¹ <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2799025>

² <https://mchb.tvisdata.hrsa.gov/Narratives/View/IIBFiveYearNeedsAssessmentSummary/MD/2022>

being. These tools empower women to better understand their bodies and recognize when to seek medical attention, potentially reducing emergency interventions and hospital visits.

Early intervention through routine monitoring, screenings, and timely medical attention can help prevent complications that could lead to severe maternal morbidity or infant mortality. Moreover, expanding access to maternal-fetal medicine, particularly for high-risk pregnancies and vulnerable populations, is essential to closing racial and socioeconomic disparities in maternal health outcomes. The Maryland Catholic Conference remains steadfast in its commitment to advocating for policies and programs that prioritize the safety, health, and well-being of all mothers and their children. Upholding the dignity of life means ensuring that every woman has access to the care she needs to experience a healthy pregnancy and that every child has the opportunity to thrive.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report on **HB 1538**.

Thank you for your consideration.