



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

January 15, 2025

House Bill 170

**Health - Maternal and Child Health Population Health Improvement Fund – Use
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 170 alters from December 31, 2025, to December 31, 2027, the date through which the Maternal and Child Health Population Health Improvement Fund may be used for expenses associated with maternal and child health population health improvements.

The continuation of this fund is essential to improving health outcomes for new mothers and their babies, particularly in addressing the disparities that disproportionately impact women of color. Black women face a maternal mortality rate (MMR) that is four times higher than that of White women, highlighting the urgent need for resources in maternal-fetal medicine.¹ Maryland currently lags in this area, and improving maternal and child health outcomes requires targeted investments, particularly for addressing postpartum complications.

High-risk pregnancies frequently lead to conditions such as gestational diabetes, hypertension, and eclampsia. Alarmingly, nearly two-thirds of severe maternal morbidity (SMM) events are preventable.² To reduce these incidents, timely assessment, screening, vital sign monitoring, and follow-up on abnormal tests are critical. The purpose of the fund is to improve maternal and child health through initiatives led by the Medical Care Programs Administration and the Prevention and Health Promotion Administration. Extending and maintaining this fund is necessary to fill existing gaps and ensure the health and safety of both mothers and babies.

Postpartum depression remains a significant concern, as many mothers may not experience symptoms until months after delivery. Widely disseminating resources for new mothers—

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

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

especially for those experiencing high-risk pregnancies—through patient forms, education, and referrals is vital. The Maryland Catholic Conference remains steadfast in its commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of mothers and their children.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report on **HB 170**.

Thank you for your consideration.