



**February 26, 2025**

**Senate Bill 933**

**Criminal Law - Causing Ingestion of an Abortion-Inducing Drug - Prohibition  
(Women's Freedom From Coercion Act)  
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**Position: Favorable With Amendments**

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 933** prohibits a person from knowingly and willfully causing another to ingest an abortion-inducing drug when the person knows or believes that the other person is pregnant and without consent, through fraud or coercion, or by force or threat of force.

Life begins at conception, and every unique and irreplaceable human life deserves protection. Many women struggle with fertility, and for those who conceive, pregnancy is often accompanied by profound gratitude and recognition of life's inherent value. Any form of coercion or force that compels a woman to ingest abortion-inducing medication is immoral. With the availability of abortion pills, such as mifepristone and misoprostol, through online orders, the risks outlined in this legislation become even more pressing. This ease of access makes it alarmingly possible for women, particularly victims of domestic violence, to be coerced into unwanted abortions. If a woman ingests these medications against her will, she has only 72 hours to receive a prescribed abortion pill reversal treatment using progesterone, which could potentially save her pregnancy.<sup>1</sup>

The dignity of every human person applies to both victims and offenders. The sentencing proposed in this legislation, up to 25 years, aligns with the punishment for second-degree murder. Though no amount of sentencing can undo the immense harm or restore the lost life, justice demands that the legal system recognize the gravity of the offense. Sentencing should serve the purpose of justice and reparation, acknowledging both the harm inflicted on the mother and the unjust loss of the unborn child. Civil authorities have a duty to defend all

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<sup>1</sup> <https://abortionpillreversal.com/abortion-pill-reversal/faq>

human life, particularly when it is wantonly or unjustly endangered. When an unborn life is forcibly ended through coercion, society must stand in defense of both the lost child and the trauma endured by the mother and her family.

The Catholic Church seeks to contribute to a society that upholds human dignity while balancing justice with mercy. Punishment should serve not only as retribution but also as a means of rehabilitation. Our faith calls us to seek justice while offering offenders an opportunity to reform. True justice should: hold offenders accountable while encouraging transformation, support victims without resorting to vengeance, restore a sense of community while resisting a culture of violence, and address the root causes of crime, such as family breakdown, poverty, addiction, and systemic violence.<sup>2</sup> We oppose policies that merely increase prison sentences without addressing underlying issues. Instead, we advocate for restorative justice programs that emphasize community healing and personal accountability.

### **Proposed Amendment**

*(C) A PERSON WHO VIOLATES THIS SECTION IS GUILTY OF A FELONY AND, UPON CONVICTION, IS SUBJECT TO IMPRISONMENT NOT EXCEEDING 10 YEARS.*

This proposed amendment acknowledges the profound harm caused to both the unborn child and the mother while also recognizing the potential for rehabilitation of the offender. It seeks to ensure justice is served while upholding the dignity of all involved.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report with the above amendments on **SB 933**.

Thank you for your consideration.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.usccb.org/resources/responsibility-rehabilitation-and-restoration-catholic-perspective-crime-and-criminal#intro>