



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

February 17, 2021

**Senate Bill 543
Insurance - Health Care Sharing Ministries – Exemption**

Senate Finance Committee

Position: Support

The Maryland Catholic Conference represents the public policy interests of the three Roman Catholic (arch)dioceses serving Maryland: the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Archdiocese of Washington, and the Diocese of Wilmington, which together encompass over one million Marylanders.

Senate Bill 543 exempts health care sharing ministries, as defined by federal law, from State insurance laws.

Defined in the Affordable Care Act, health care sharing ministries are exempted from the law's individual mandate since they exist outside the insurance paradigm. Ministries are registered as 501(c)(3) charities with the IRS and regulated under each state's attorney general and charity laws. These charitable organizations should also be exempted from state insurance laws since they are not insurance.

There are 107 CMS-certified health care sharing ministries nationwide that serve over 1.5 million members. These faith-based, nonprofit, membership organizations facilitate sharing the cost of members' medical expenses. Members contribute a monthly share amount and request cash-pay prices from their doctor or hospital while the ministry confirms the medical care meets their guidelines, and then facilitates transfer of funds. Ministries also provide opportunities for members to pray, encourage and support each other and share non-medical expenses like adoption or funeral costs.

The Catholic Conference supports this legislation which will ensure these faith-based nonprofits are able to continue in their mission and be recognized appropriately in the law.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report for **SB 543**. Thank you for your consideration.