



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

March 10, 2021

Senate Bill 891

**Public Health - Maternal and Child Mortality - Review and Perinatal Hospice Services
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 891 would ensure the State Department of Health maintains a list of perinatal hospice programs on its website and creates a printable brochure for physicians and nurse practitioners to share with families who want the information.

Perinatal hospice and palliative care is specialized care provided to families when their baby is given a life-limiting diagnosis in utero and may have just days or hours to live after birth. From the time of diagnosis through delivery, the multidisciplinary perinatal hospice team provides physical, emotional and spiritual support. They empower families to process the diagnosis, find moments of meaning making, welcome their baby and say goodbye. This care is widely accepted by medical professionals, including by the American College of Obstetricians, Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine and the American Academy of Pediatrics.¹

Maryland parents deserve to know all of their options, presented in a sensitive manner, when given a life-limiting diagnosis in utero. Yet few Maryland families receive information about perinatal hospice or are treated insensitively and feel abandoned and without support at this difficult time. Providing this information respects the autonomy, choice, and decision making of parents.

Pope Francis, in an address to perinatal hospice professionals, called perinatal comfort care “an approach to care that humanizes medicine,” where “parents are helped to process their mourning and to comprehend it.”² Perinatal hospice emphasizes dignity, comfort, and a peaceful experience for the whole family. Families are encouraged to collect remembrances like photos and handprints and given the gift of time with their baby. Ultimately, research shows 98% of parents who used perinatal hospice said they had no regrets and cherished the experience they had to love, hold and meet their baby for the duration of their life, no matter how brief.³

Families deserve to have this information. It is for these reasons that the Maryland Catholic Conference respectfully urges a favorable report for **SB 891**. Thank you for your consideration.

¹ “Perinatal Palliative Care,” [Obstetrics & Gynecology](#) September 2019, Vol. 134,3

² Pope Francis, [Address to Yes to Life Conference](#), 25 May 2019

³ Wool, et.al. “I Would Do It All Over Again’: Cherishing Time and the Absence of Regret in Continuing a Pregnancy after a Life-Limiting Diagnosis” [Journal of Clinical Ethics](#), Fall 2018 Vol. 29,3