



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

January 26, 2021

House Bill 235
Correctional Services – Pregnant Incarcerated Individuals – Substance Abuse
Assessment and Treatment

House Judiciary 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.

House Bill 235 supports the needs of a vulnerable population in Maryland – pregnant inmates – and seeks to affirm their dignity and worth by requiring correctional facilities to screen pregnant women at intake for substance use disorders, regardless of the length of time the inmate will be incarcerated. It further sets requirements and guidelines for those women to receive substance abuse treatment, if desired, and provides for health insurance upon their release.

The Conference supports legislation that ensures access to quality, affordable, and life-giving health care for all. The opioid crisis has dramatically intensified the need for behavioral health services in Maryland. An increasing number of Marylanders are in need of healing and as such, every effort must be made to make services available to all those who are seeking behavioral health care. The Conference will support expanding access to health care options for all who need it, regardless of status, as every person has a basic right to adequate health care arising from the Church's teaching on the sanctity and dignity of human life.

Protecting the needs of a woman during her pregnancy can have a positive effect on a woman's role as a mother and citizen. With the growing number of incarcerated women who are pregnant, it is important to recognize that failing to provide substance abuse treatment and behavioral healthcare for these women may have significant unforeseen costs to themselves, their growing families, and society at large.

The Conference appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on **HB 235**.