



**Senate Bill 778 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Children and Pregnant Women
(Healthy Babies Equity Act)**

**Senate Finance Committee
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**Written testimony submitted by
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Position: Support

On behalf of Holy Cross Health, a Catholic not-for-profit health system that primarily serves Maryland's two largest counties — Montgomery and Prince George's – I write in support of SB 778 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Children and Pregnancy Women (Healthy Babies Equity Act).

Improving maternal health and newborn outcomes has been at the core of Holy Cross Health's service to the community since its founding in 1963. For nearly 60 years, Holy Cross has been a leading provider of prenatal, obstetric, and gynecologic services, with a special focus on providing prenatal care to women who lack access to health care and who are at-risk and economically disadvantaged. Our patients include women who have immigrated to the region and lack insurance.

In 1999, thousands more women were entrusted to our care when Holy Cross Health formed a collaborative partnership with the Montgomery County Department of Health to provide comprehensive prenatal and post-delivery education and care to uninsured women. The Maternity Partnership Program has served more than 23,000 women at Holy Cross Health's two hospital clinic sites (Holy Cross Hospital and Holy Cross Germantown Hospital), including women with diabetes, hypertension, and a history of pre-term labor. Holy Cross staff are bilingual and trained to provide culturally competent care.

The Maternity Partnership Program not only facilitates care for pregnancy, delivery, and postpartum, it can also be the start of a continuum of care for underserved communities, thus moving away from episodic care (Emergency Department) to annual well checkups, preventive care, and screening procedures. This is crucial for high-risk patients with chronic health issues (e.g., diabetes and hypertension).

In Fiscal 2021, through the Maternity Partnership Program, Holy Cross Health provided prenatal care for 1,168 uninsured pregnant women and teens. Early and consistent prenatal care provides optimal maternal/newborn outcomes. Between 1.9%-2.7% of Maternity Partnership newborns were low birthweight (<2,500 grams), compared to the state goal of 8%.

Importantly, women who receive prenatal care through the Maternity Partnership Program at Holy Cross are referred to one of our four health centers for their on-going care. This allows for continued post-delivery care and for managing their ongoing health as well.

As the nation's health care delivery system and local, state, and federal governments strive to address Social Determinants of Health and eliminate social and economic barriers that prevent all residents from living a healthy life, Holy Cross Health has demonstrated the value of quality pre-natal care to improving maternal health outcomes and the health of newborns. Giving vulnerable mothers and their newborns a fighting chance at life until our society removes the obstacles to a healthy life advances the common good and builds a more just and equitable society.

Please support SB 778 and extend Medicaid coverage to 12 months post-delivery.

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