



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

March 15, 2023

Senate Bill 832

**Public Health - Pregnancy - Coercion (Coercive Abuse Against Mothers
Prevention Act)**

Senate Finance Committee

Position: Favorable

The Catholic Conference 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.

SB 832 would prohibit an individual from committing or threatening certain actions with the intent of coercing a pregnant woman to have an abortion. The bill provides public assistance in specific cases to those individuals who are pregnant minors. SB 832 requires health care facilities that perform abortions to post certain signs and requires certain employees to make reports under certain circumstances. The bill also requires health care providers to comply with a waiting period before performing an abortion if the employee/volunteer suspects the pregnant woman is being coerced into having an abortion.

SB 832's preamble states that many women report that they were coerced into abortions and because of such have suffered grievous, physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual harm as a result. Many victims of sex trafficking are often coerced into abortions due to the circumstances of sex trafficking. More cases of coerced or attempted coerced abortions are reported if women are informed of their rights and provided information concerning treatment and protection options.

Coercive abuse is a serious women's health issue. Women should not be subject to any threats, harm, repercussions, and/or violence. Women must be free from coercive abuse when it comes to deciding whether they should continue with their pregnancy or not. Women should be free to decide to choose life. SB 832 would help empower women by helping them fight

against coercive abuse and sex trafficking and will help women be able to decide, free from any coercion, if they want to continue with their pregnancy.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report on **SB 832**.

Thank you for your consideration.