



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

March 20, 2024

Senate Bill 527

**Community Colleges – Contraception – Access Requirements
House Appropriations and Health and Government Operations Committee**

Position: Unfavorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) 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.

Senate Bill 527 mandates that each community college must develop and implement a plan by October 1, 2024, to offer students access to over-the-counter (OTC) contraception. The bill requires community colleges to submit an annual report to the Maryland Higher Education Commission by July 1 of each year. Additionally, the Commission is obligated to present a report to the General Assembly by September 1 each year. The Maryland Department of Health is authorized to assist a community college upon request.

The utilization of over-the-counter (OTC) contraception eliminates the need for clinician involvement in obtaining these medications. Typically, clinicians guide contraception use, discussing potential health implications based on individual conditions. However, without such consultations, students, including those under 18, attending community colleges may be exposed to the misuse and potential dangers associated with contraceptive use. The broader effects of contraceptive use on women and society are under researched. During the average human menstrual cycle, women experience an ~8-fold increase in 17 β -estradiol (the most prevalent and potent form of estrogen in mammals) and an ~80-fold increase in progesterone.¹ During the average human menstrual cycle, women experience significant hormonal fluctuations, and using OTC contraceptives on campus may encourage the suppression of natural sex hormone production. This manipulation can impact various aspects of daily human activities, such as stress, eating patterns, emotion regulation, learning, and attraction, with long-lasting cascading effects.

While Senate Bill 527 aims to provide access to OTC contraception through vending machines, retail establishments on campus, and the student health center, it is noted that the bill lacks a

¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7882021/>

comprehensive approach to health decisions and the potential implications of contraceptive use on individuals. Instead of solely focusing on promoting contraceptive use, institutions of higher education should prioritize enhancing knowledge and awareness of women's bodies while safeguarding their unique ecosystems. Students should have a range of options beyond contraception, emphasizing a holistic approach to women's health.

For these reasons, the MCC asks for an unfavorable report on **SB527**.

Thank you for your consideration.