



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 28, 2024

House Bill 965

Maryland Department of Health – Breast Cancer Program – Eligibility and Public Awareness Campaign
House Health and Government Operations Committee

Position: Favorable

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.

House Bill 965 alters the eligibility requirements for certain screening mammograms and clinical breast examinations provided by the Breast Cancer Program to include women under the age of 45 years who are considered high risk for breast cancer; and requires the Maryland Department of Health to develop and implement a public awareness campaign for the Program.

Ensuring the health and well-being of women is a top priority, especially considering that an average of 5,054 women are diagnosed with breast cancer annually in Maryland.¹ Women inheriting the BRCA genes face a significantly elevated risk of developing breast cancer during their lives. In our society, the increased exposure to carcinogens heightens the likelihood of various forms of cancer, including breast cancer in women.

The extension of the Breast Cancer Program to encompass women under the age of 45 seeks to improve the chances of early-stage diagnosis, ultimately enhancing their prospects of survival. A public awareness campaign will further emphasize the potential occurrence of breast cancer, motivating women to undergo annual health exams for early detection. Equipping women with information on breast cancer prevention is crucial for ensuring their access to necessary care.

The Catholic Conference is actively committed to upholding the integrity of women, particularly in healthcare. This bill plays a crucial role in providing essential access to preventive care for breast cancer.

¹ <https://www.regionalcancercare.org/news/breast-cancer-diagnoses-in-maryland-in-2023-what-these-rcca-experts-want-you-to-know/>

For these reasons, the MCC asks for a favorable report on **HB 965**.

Thank you for your consideration.