



**MARYLAND  
CATHOLIC  
CONFERENCE**

**March 07, 2024**

**HB 1372**

**Health and Taxation – Digital Social Media Services and the Mental Health Care Fund for Children and Youth**

**House Ways and Means Committee**

**Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) offers this testimony in support of House Bill 1372. 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.

House Bill 1372 would establish the Mental Health Care Fund for Children and Youth. This legislation is a step in the right direction towards addressing the urgent mental health needs of children and youth in our state.

From a Catholic perspective, every child is a precious gift from God, endowed with inherent dignity and worth. It is our responsibility to ensure that all children have access to the care and support they need to thrive physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Unfortunately, many children and youth in our state face significant barriers to accessing mental health care services, including limited availability, affordability, and stigma surrounding mental illness.

The establishment of the Mental Health Care Fund for Children and Youth represents a proactive and compassionate response to these challenges. By allocating resources to support improved access to mental health care services for children and youth, we demonstrate our commitment to promoting their well-being and ensuring that they have the opportunity to reach their full potential. The provision in the legislation that imposes a tax on certain annual revenues derived from digital social media services to fund the Mental Health Care Fund is commendable. This innovative approach to funding mental health care services reflects our collective responsibility to care for the most vulnerable members of our society and to address the root causes of mental illness.

The MCC appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 1372.

