



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 18, 2025

Senate Bill 674

**Maryland Commission for Women - Maryland Collaborative to Advance
Implementation of Coverage of Over-the-Counter Birth Control
Senate Finance 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 674 requires the Maryland Commission for Women to establish the Maryland Collaborative to Advance Implementation of Coverage of Over-the-Counter Birth Control to study access to over-the-counter birth control; and requiring the Collaborative to submit an interim report by January 1, 2026, and a final report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly by December 1, 2027.

Maryland is already one of the most permissive states regarding reproductive healthcare. With the rise of telehealth and the availability of contraceptives through vending machines without prescriptions, access is not a barrier. Even for individuals without insurance, contraceptives remain widely available at low cost through drugstores and online retailers. Given this accessibility, further efforts to expand over-the-counter (OTC) birth control are unnecessary.

Moreover, the broader effects of contraceptive use on women's health and society remain under-researched. The average menstrual cycle involves significant hormonal fluctuations, including an ~8-fold increase in 17β -estradiol (a potent form of estrogen) and an ~80-fold increase in progesterone.¹ The suppression of these natural hormone cycles through OTC contraceptives, particularly among young women on college campuses, may have lasting effects on stress, metabolism, emotional regulation, learning, and attraction. Rather than prioritizing the expansion of contraceptive access, legislation should focus on holistic, life-affirming approaches to women's health. By promoting natural reproductive health and

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

supporting overall well-being, we can empower women to better understand and care for their bodies in a way that respects their natural biological rhythms.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for an unfavorable report on **SB 674**.

Thank you for your consideration.