



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

January 29, 2025

House Bill 334

Universal Newborn Nurse Home Visiting Services - Program Establishment and Insurance Coverage
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 334 requires the Maryland Department of Health to establish a program to provide universal newborn nurse home visiting services to all families with newborns residing in the State; requiring insurers, nonprofit health service plans, and health maintenance organizations that provide certain health benefits under certain insurance policies or contracts to provide certain coverage and reimbursement for universal newborn nurse home visiting services; requiring a report on the status of newborn nurse home visiting services by December 1, 2026.

This legislation provides vital support for new families in Maryland by ensuring access to newborn home visits. Newborns are particularly vulnerable to illness due to their underdeveloped immune systems. These home visits allow healthcare professionals to educate parents on proper feeding schedules, safe sleep practices, and infant care routines, helping to prevent avoidable tragedies such as Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and other preventable causes of infant mortality. Families can also receive guidance tailored to any special needs of the child, such as addressing feeding difficulties, monitoring health vitals, and managing fussiness or other concerns.

Equally important is the care provided to mothers during these visits. The postpartum period is a critical time, as many women experience significant physical and emotional changes. Postpartum depression is a common condition that can impact a mother's ability to care for herself and her baby. These visits allow healthcare professionals to monitor a mother's vitals, including blood pressure and recovery from childbirth or a C-section, and provide early

detection of conditions requiring medical attention.¹ Additionally, they create a platform for discussing emotional well-being and connecting mothers to mental health resources if needed. For families experiencing financial strain, these visits can also serve as a bridge to essential programs like WIC, which provide critical financial assistance and goods for mothers and infants. By addressing both physical and emotional health and connecting families to resources, this legislation ensures that fewer families slip through the healthcare cracks. This additional support could make the difference between life and death for a vulnerable newborn or a struggling new mother. It is important to note that these services are entirely voluntary, with no negative consequences for families who choose not to participate. Parents can seek these optional follow-up visits if needed and decline them if they are not required. By offering these critical resources, Maryland is making a meaningful investment in the health, safety, and well-being of its youngest residents and their families.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report on **HB 334**.

Thank you for your consideration.

¹ <https://www.rush.edu/news/nurse-home-visits-help-moms-and-newborns#:~:text=Screen%20for%20baby%20blues%20and,any%20concerns%20and%20answer%20questions.>