



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

April 7, 2026

Senate Bill 532

Higher Education Institutions - Over-the-Counter Contraception - Access and Reporting

House Appropriations and Health 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 532 requires each public senior higher education institution and community college to submit a report on contraception access to the Maryland Higher Education Commission each year; requiring the Commission to submit a report on contraception access to the General Assembly each year; and requiring each community college to provide students with access to all methods of over-the-counter contraception.

Hormone-based contraception works by altering a woman's natural hormonal cycle, often suppressing ovulation and creating an artificial hormonal state. Studies and clinical literature have identified potential adverse effects associated with certain hormonal contraceptives, including impacts on mood and mental health, changes in libido, increased risk of blood clots, stroke, and hypertension in some populations, and complex associations with certain cancers.¹ While some contraceptives may reduce the risk of specific cancers, they may increase the risk of others, and long-term effects on fertility and ovarian health continue to be debated in medical literature. These risks underscore the importance of comprehensive counseling and informed consent.

Institutions of higher education should not be reduced to distribution sites that are evaluated primarily on how much contraception they provide. If the General Assembly is focused on student health, equal attention should be given to ensuring that students receive full and

¹<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10347535/#:~:text=Hormone%2Dbased%20contraception%20disrupts%20hormonal,and%20their%20right%20to%20autonomy.>

balanced information about potential risks, side effects, and long-term considerations. Access alone should not be the sole policy objective; informed decision-making must accompany it.

Human dignity must remain paramount in public policy, including respect for the procreative dimension of human sexuality. A respect-for-life framework affirms that human life possesses inherent worth from its earliest beginnings and that procreation is not merely a biological function, but a meaningful and integral aspect of human relationships. Expanding institutional mandates related to contraception, particularly without clear protection for conscience and religious conviction—raises serious ethical considerations. Any policy in this area should prioritize human dignity, safeguard respect for procreation, ensure transparency in medical information, and honor the diverse moral and religious beliefs of students and institutions.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for an unfavorable report on **SB 532**.

Thank you for your consideration.