
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 169
Hospitals – Emergency Pregnancy-Related Medical Conditions - Procedures
Finance Committee
February 3, 2026

Social Work Advocates for Social Change strongly supports SB 169, which mirrors the federal Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act (EMTALA) and codifies procedures by which emergency departments in Maryland hospitals must abide if a patient presents with an emergency pregnancy-related medical condition.

SB 169 ensures that pregnant patients experiencing medical emergencies can receive timely, appropriate and life-saving care throughout Maryland. As social work students, we are trained to uphold the principles of social justice, dignity, and access to essential health care.¹ Clarity and consistency in emergency medical standards are essential. Patients experiencing medical emergencies are often at their most vulnerable and do not have the ability to choose where they receive care. This bill helps ensure that all pregnant patients in Maryland can rely on emergency departments to provide necessary, stabilizing care when it is needed most.

While federal EMTALA has been a critical tool for lifesaving care, it is not sufficiently supported by the current federal administration. For decades, EMTALA has required emergency departments to evaluate, treat, and stabilize individuals with emergency medical conditions, including pregnancy-related emergencies, regardless of insurance status or ability to pay. Alarming, the current federal administration has been rescinding guidance related to EMTALA that explicitly requires abortion care as a necessary stabilizing treatment, as the policy did not “reflect the policy of this Administration”.^{2,3} Moreover, the Supreme Court has allowed lower court cases to stand where states argued their abortion bans are not preempted by EMTALA.⁴ With the federal government stepping back from clear guidance and enforcement of EMTALA, it is critical for Maryland to take action to protect patients.

SB 169 protects pregnant Marylanders by codifying enforceable state protections and ensuring patients aren’t subjected to shifting and unclear federal policies. As future social workers who will be serving individuals and families across health care, behavioral health, and community settings, we strongly support SB 169 as a necessary step to protect patient safety and uphold equitable access to emergency medical care.

Social Work Advocates for Social Change urges a favorable report on SB 169.

Social Work Advocates for Social Change is a coalition of MSW students at the University of Maryland School of Social Work that seeks to promote equity and justice through public policy, and to engage the communities impacted by public policy in the policymaking process.

¹ National Association of Social Workers. (2021). *Code of ethics of the National Association of Social Workers*. <https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English>.

² Department of Health and Human Services. May 2025. Memorandum Rescinding Enforcement of EMTALA Obligations specific to Patients who are Pregnant or Experiencing Pregnancy Loss. <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-22-22-hospitals-rescinded-05292024.pdf>

³ Center for Medicaid and Medicare. 2025. *CMS Statement on Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA)*. <https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/press-releases/cms-statement-emergency-medical-treatment-and-labor-act-emtala>

⁴ *Moyle v. United States & Idaho v. United States*. 603 U.S. ____ (2024). https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/23pdf/23-726_6jgm.pdf