



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 24, 2026

Senate Bill 611

**Maryland Department of Health - Study on Maryland Medical Assistance
Program Reimbursement of Hospice Room and Board Services
Senate Finance 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.

Senate Bill 611 requires the Division of Health Care Financing and Medicaid within the Maryland Department of Health to study the impact of requiring the Maryland Medical Assistance Program to provide reimbursement for room and board services provided by a hospice house; and requiring the Department to report its findings to the Senate Finance Committee and the House Health Committee by September 30, 2026.

At the heart of the Catholic Church's ministry to the sick, elderly, disabled, and underserved is Christ's call to care for those most in need of compassion and accompaniment. The Church teaches that every human life possesses inherent dignity, regardless of age or health status. True compassion means ensuring access to high-quality medical care, including effective pain management and comprehensive palliative and hospice services.

Currently, Medicaid fee-for-service reimburses hospice room and board at a per diem rate equal to 95% of the skilled nursing facility rate. However, not all patients have access to skilled nursing facilities, nor are those settings always appropriate for individuals who require intensive symptom management in a hospice house environment.¹ Hospice houses are specifically designed to provide comfort-focused, end-of-life care in a setting that prioritizes dignity, family presence, and specialized pain management. Without adequate reimbursement

¹ chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://health.maryland.gov/mmcp/provider/Documents/transmittals/PT25-26_Clarification_of_HC_Reimbursement_and_Payment_Responsibility_for_Hospice_R&B_Pass_Through.pdf

for room and board, access to these facilities can be limited—particularly for low-income patients who rely on Medicaid.

Studying and potentially expanding reimbursement for hospice room and board would promote more equitable access to this level of care. It would ensure that patients are not denied placement in hospice houses simply because of their insurance status or financial circumstances. Increased access would allow more individuals to receive expert pain and symptom management in an environment designed for end-of-life care, reducing unnecessary hospitalizations and supporting families during a profoundly vulnerable time.

The end of life can also be a time of reconciliation, healing, and spiritual preparation. A hospice setting that integrates medical, emotional, and spiritual support offers patients and families the opportunity to approach death with peace and dignity. In a society that often distances itself from the realities of death and dying, strengthening hospice access affirms that the elderly and seriously ill are not burdens, but persons worthy of love and care.

While the Church firmly opposes assisted suicide and any practice that undermines the sanctity of life, it strongly supports policies that expand access to compassionate, high-quality end-of-life care. By studying and addressing reimbursement for hospice room and board, Senate Bill 611 takes an important step toward ensuring that all Marylanders—regardless of income—can receive dignified, comfort-centered care at the end of life.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report on **SB 611**.

Thank you for your consideration.