



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 27, 2026

Senate Bill 891
Health, Health Insurance, and Health Occupations - Perinatal Mental Health
Conditions
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 891 requires certain insurers, nonprofit health service plans, and health maintenance organizations to provide coverage for screening for perinatal mental health conditions at certain times; requiring the Maryland Department of Health to establish a perinatal mental health condition screening program; requiring certain applicants for the renewal of a health occupation license or certificate to provide documentation that the applicant completed continuing education credit hours on perinatal mental health conditions.

Routine screening for perinatal and maternal mental health conditions is proven to reduce symptoms by enabling early identification and timely intervention. The use of standardized screening tools allows clinicians to detect depression, anxiety, and other disorders before they escalate, improving outcomes for both mother and child. According to the National Institutes of Health, screening tools are especially important because many mothers may not voluntarily report symptoms or may dismiss their emotional distress as a normal part of pregnancy or postpartum recovery.¹

Data underscores the importance of proactive care. In 2020, approximately 13.4% of Maryland mothers surveyed reported experiencing postpartum depressive symptoms, according to reporting citing the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.² Nationally, roughly one in five

¹ <https://policycentermmh.org/universal-screening-for-maternal-mental-health-disorders-issue-brief/#:~:text=What%20is%20Universal%20Screening,adverse%20maternal%20and%20infant%20outcomes>

² <https://wtop.com/maryland/2023/08/the-u-s-is-failing-mothers-when-it-comes-to-maternal-mental-health-how-is-it-in-maryland/>

women experience a maternal mental health condition during pregnancy or within the first year after birth. These conditions are among the most common complications of pregnancy and, if untreated, can affect maternal bonding, infant development, and long-term family stability.

Providing a standing referral helps remove stigma and barriers to care by normalizing mental health support as part of routine prenatal and postpartum services. As Pope Leo XIV reflects, care must move beyond “selfishness and utilitarian logics” and instead be directed toward others through listening, encounter, and accompaniment.³ In light of growing research on maternal mental health outcomes, we have a responsibility to promote early detection, compassionate intervention, and accessible treatment to ensure healthy mothers and healthy babies throughout our communities.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report on **SB 891**.

Thank you for your consideration.

³ <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2025-11/pope-on-addiction-we-must-commit-to-prevention.html>