



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

January 28, 2026

Senate Bill 19
Maryland Commission on Women's Health Advancement - Establishment
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 19 establishes the Maryland Commission on Women's Health Advancement to study the feasibility of establishing a State women's hospital in Southern Maryland and a statewide clinical network to advance women's health; requiring the Commission by January 1, 2027, to submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an initial action plan, including a timeline, milestones, and specific research objectives.

Creating a commission to study gaps in women's health care is essential to supporting data-driven policymaking. The cost and complexity of women's health care vary significantly across a woman's lifespan and differ by age, geography, and demographic factors. Maryland's evolving maternal health landscape highlights the need for a comprehensive assessment of where services are lacking and how care delivery can be improved.

Significant disparities persist in maternal health outcomes. Black women experience a maternal mortality rate four times higher than that of White women, underscoring the urgent need for expanded access to maternal-fetal medicine and postpartum care.¹ Maryland continues to lag in addressing these disparities, and improving maternal and child health outcomes will require targeted investments, especially in managing postpartum complications. High-risk pregnancies are often associated with conditions such as gestational diabetes, hypertension, and preeclampsia. Research shows that nearly two-thirds of severe maternal morbidity events are preventable.² Preventing these outcomes depends on timely screening, careful monitoring of

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<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5915910/#:~:text=Significant%20racial%20and%20ethnic%20disparities,levers%20to%20reduce%20their%20occurrence>.

² <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2799025>

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vital signs, early intervention, and appropriate follow-up care. A coordinated, statewide approach could help ensure consistent standards of care and improved outcomes.

If a centralized women's health hospital is determined to be feasible, it should provide comprehensive, life-affirming care that respects the dignity of all human life, including life in utero. Care should focus on supporting women through pregnancy, childbirth, postpartum recovery, and throughout the aging process, offering compassionate treatment that respects the natural course of life and dying.

The Maryland Catholic Conference remains committed to advancing women's health while upholding the sanctity of life from conception to natural death. Establishing a commission to evaluate the feasibility of a centralized women's health entity provides an important opportunity to assess how Maryland can better serve women across all stages of life while respecting human dignity.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report on **SB 19**.

Thank you for your consideration.