

# **Maryland Catholic Conference\_FAV\_HB1012\_SenateCros**

Uploaded by: Diane Arias

Position: FAV



MARYLAND  
CATHOLIC  
CONFERENCE

**March 24, 2026**

**House Bill 1012**

**Public Health - Local Suicide Fatality Review Teams - Authorization  
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.

**House Bill 1012** authorizes county or municipality to establish a local suicide fatality review team; requiring a local team to coordinate with certain local child fatality review teams and the State Suicide Fatality Review Committee; exempting certain meetings of a local team from the Open Meetings Act; providing certain immunity for certain actions taken by a person as a member of a local team; authorizing a local team to request and receive certain information under certain authority; establishing that a local team is a public health authority conducting certain activities in accordance with a certain federal law; providing that certain information acquired by a local team is confidential and exempt from disclosure under the Maryland Public Information Act, discovery, or introduction as evidence in any proceeding; prohibiting certain persons from testifying in any proceeding about details of a local team meeting; and generally relating to local suicide fatality review teams.

The purpose of a local suicide fatality review team is to prevent suicide deaths by:

1. Reviewing suicide deaths that occur within the county;
2. Identifying systemic, service, and policy factors associated with suicide risk;
3. Promoting coordination among entities involved in prevention, crisis response, treatment, and postvention; and
4. Developing actionable recommendations to reduce future suicides.

Catholic hospitals serve as integral members of communities across Maryland and care for a significant portion of Marylanders. Their clinical expertise, data collection, and deep community engagement uniquely position them to contribute meaningful insight to the work of local

fatality review teams. Their participation can strengthen analysis of risk factors, service gaps, and opportunities for improved coordination of care.

As neighboring states continue to expand access to physician-assisted suicide, it is especially important for Maryland to reaffirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person. Public policy should clearly communicate that individuals experiencing suffering, disability, or mental health challenges are not burdens, but valued members of our communities. Every life matters. In 2022, suicide was the 11th leading cause of death for all ages in the United States. Suicide was the second leading cause of death for people ages 10–14 and 20–34, and the third leading cause for people ages 15–19.<sup>1</sup>

In response to this crisis, Pope Leo XIV has urged communities to ensure that those who are struggling “always find a community that welcomes them, listens to them and accompanies them,” offering comfort, support, and necessary professional help.<sup>2</sup> Establishing and strengthening local suicide fatality review teams is an important step toward building that kind of responsive, compassionate community—one that not only studies loss, but actively works to prevent it.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report on **HB 1012**.

Thank you for your consideration.

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<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db509.htm#:~:text=In%202022%2C%20suicide%20was%20the,the%20National%20Vital%20Statistics%20System.>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.franciscanmedia.org/news-commentary/popes-prayer-intention-is-for-those-struggling-with-suicidal-thoughts/>

**HB 1012 FAV FCG CE LS26 FIN.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jessica Fitzwater

Position: FAV



**FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT**  
**OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE**

Jessica Fitzwater  
*County Executive*

**HB 1012 – Public Health - Local Suicide Fatality Review Teams - Authorization**

**DATE:** March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2026  
**COMMITTEE:** Senate Finance Committee  
**POSITION:** Favorable  
**FROM:** The Office of Frederick County Executive Jessica Fitzwater

As the County Executive of Frederick County, I urge the committee to give **HB 1012 – Public Health - Local Suicide Fatality Review Teams – Authorization** a favorable report. This legislation aims to provide counties and municipalities with the authority to establish local suicide fatality review teams.

Communities across the country are facing significant mental health challenges and rates of suicide continue to rise. As we continue to work to improve the health of Marylanders and reduce mortality rates across the State, we can learn lessons from our successful approach to addressing the opioid crisis. Currently, counties have the authority to establish local overdose fatality review teams, which provide structured and confidential case reviews of overdose fatalities in the County. Frederick County’s overdose fatality review team has been incredibly successful in identifying patterns and trends in these fatalities and using their findings to establish intervention strategies that have drastically reduced the number of overdose fatalities county-wide. The effectiveness of these local review teams demonstrates that when local experts have access to relevant data, local governments can implement tailored interventions and solutions that best serve their communities.

The State has a suicide fatality review committee that investigates suicide deaths, identifies risk factors, and recommends prevention measures. However, it focuses only on state-wide data and misses local county trends and strategies. By allowing counties to form their own review teams, local governments can identify solutions that are best fit for their communities, following established guidelines and privacy rules similar to those used by local overdose fatality review teams.

Frederick County is proud that the success of our local overdose fatality review team has led to a decrease in overdose deaths yearly since 2022. I am confident that a Frederick County local suicide fatality review team would be equally successful in identifying points of intervention and reducing preventable mortalities county-wide.

Thank you for your consideration of HB 1012. I urge you to advance this bill with a favorable report.

Jessica Fitzwater, County Executive  
Frederick County, MD

**HB1012-FIN\_MACo\_SUP.pdf**

Uploaded by: Karrington Anderson

Position: FAV



## House Bill 1012

### *Public Health - Local Suicide Fatality Review Teams - Authorization*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Finance Committee

Date: March 24, 2026

From: Karrington Anderson

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 1012. This bill authorizes local governments to establish multidisciplinary and multiagency suicide fatality review teams to examine suicide deaths at the local level and develop recommendations aimed at prevention.

Suicide remains a significant public health concern in Maryland communities. Counties are often on the front lines of behavioral health services, crisis response, and emergency medical services. HB 1012 empowers local jurisdictions to bring these partners together in a structured and collaborative manner to better understand the circumstances surrounding suicide deaths and identify opportunities for prevention.

Under this bill, a county or municipality may establish a local suicide fatality review team, and two or more counties may form a single multicounty team. This flexibility is especially important for smaller or rural jurisdictions that may benefit from shared expertise and resources. The purpose of a local team is to prevent suicide deaths by reviewing cases occurring within the county, identifying systemic, service, and policy factors associated with suicide risk, promoting coordination among relevant entities, and developing actionable recommendations.

The bill outlines a comprehensive team composition that draws on local health officers, social services, behavioral health providers, law enforcement, emergency medical services, hospitals, school leadership, and community representatives. By convening these stakeholders, local teams can examine trends in suicide, identify gaps in systems of care or coordination, and submit recommendations to the State Suicide Fatality Review Committee or other appropriate local entities.

By strengthening coordination and supporting evidence-based recommendations, HB 1012 provides counties with a meaningful tool to reduce suicide deaths and improve behavioral health outcomes in their communities. For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report.

# **Del. Fair HB 1012 sponsor testimony Senate Version**

Uploaded by: Kris Fair

Position: FAV

**KRIS FAIR**  
*Legislative District 3*  
Frederick County

Government, Labor, and  
Elections Committee

*Subcommittees*

Chair, Election Law

Local Government/Bi-County  
Agencies and Administration

Chair, Maryland Legislative  
LGBTQ+ Caucus



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**THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES**  
**ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401**

The Honorable Pamela Beidle, Chair  
Finance Committee  
Maryland Senate  
3 East Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**SPONSOR TESTIMONY**

**HB 1012: Public Health – Local Suicide Fatality Review Teams – Authorization**

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and Members of the Committee,

HB 1012 takes a measured but meaningful step: it authorizes local public health authorities to establish suicide fatality review teams, using existing local resources and the professionals who best understand their own communities. Today, one of the most significant gaps in our suicide-prevention efforts is the absence of a legally protected forum where relevant agencies can share information candidly, without risk of compelled third-party disclosure. HB 1012 closes this gap.

Maryland has already demonstrated the value of this model. Local Overdose Fatality Review Teams created by bipartisan legislation led by former Delegate Kelly Schulz, along with Child Fatality Review and Infant Mortality Review Teams, have shown how protected, multidisciplinary local review can identify contextual factors, system intercept points, and upstream opportunities for prevention. HB 1012 builds on these proven structures by extending the approach to suicide, a pressing and growing public health challenge.

While a state-level suicide fatality review program exists, it does not review every death by suicide, nor does it provide the detailed, local analysis needed to shape responsive policies and interventions. Since the program's creation in 2022, only one report on policy change has been issued. Local jurisdictions need the ability to review their own cases and generate insights more immediately relevant to local needs.

We are working closely with our local health department, other public health partners, and the Maryland Department of Health, and together we worked on amendments collaboratively with the House Health Committee to ensure this bill is implemented effectively and with the utmost sensitivity for victims privacy.

The bill passed 128-8 in the House and received a bipartisan vote in Committee. Authorizing local suicide fatality review teams will strengthen Maryland's suicide-prevention infrastructure, align local and state efforts, and empower communities with the information they need to save lives.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 1012.

Thank you for your consideration.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kris Fair". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Delegate Kris Fair  
District 3, Frederick County

**HB 1012 - FIN - MACHO - LOSAA.docx.pdf**

Uploaded by: Maryland State of

Position: FAV



**2026 SESSION  
POSITION PAPER**

**BILL:** HB 1012 – Public Health - Local Suicide Fatality Review Teams - Authorization  
**COMMITTEE:** Senate Finance Committee  
**POSITION:** Letter of Support As Amended  
**BILL ANALYSIS:** HB 1012 authorizes a county or municipality to establish a local suicide fatality review team, requires the team to coordinate with a local child fatality review team, establishes memberships requirements and protections for the appropriate use of data and information by the teams, among other requirements.

**POSITION RATIONALE:** The Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO) submits this letter in strong support of HB 1012 as amended. The proposed bill provides a critical opportunity to strengthen suicide prevention efforts across Maryland by allowing local jurisdictions to establish multidisciplinary suicide fatality review teams. These teams would examine individual suicide deaths in a protected, confidential setting to identify contributing factors, system gaps, and opportunities for prevention. The bill does not mandate these teams but if a jurisdiction is interested, and Frederick and several others are, they *may* establish these teams for their communities.

HB 1012 follows the successful model established in 2014 for Local Overdose Fatality Review Teams and, as amended, requires coordination with local child fatality review teams. That legislation recognized the importance of creating a confidential, structured process that permits the sharing of otherwise protected health information for the sole purpose of prevention. These review teams have been a critical tool for overdose response that have helped local jurisdictions identify opportunities for system-level changes. Authorizing local suicide fatality review teams would apply this same proven framework to another urgent public health crisis. It would ensure appropriate confidentiality protections while enabling responsible data and information sharing and multidisciplinary collaboration.

Maryland has taken important steps related to the review of suicide fatalities with the establishment of the state level Suicide Fatality Review Team. That team reviews aggregated statewide data to inform statewide approaches to suicide prevention. While aggregate data provide valuable context, they are not sufficient to uncover the nuanced, case-specific factors that often reveal missed opportunities for intervention. A local fatality review framework would allow local multidisciplinary teams, including public health, behavioral health, health care providers, law enforcement, schools, and community partners, to review individual cases in a legally protected environment. This deeper analysis is essential to understanding root causes and strengthening prevention strategies at the jurisdiction level.

Suicide is a complex and multifaceted public health challenge. Empowering local communities to conduct suicide fatality reviews reflects a strong commitment to saving lives and improving the systems that serve Maryland residents.

For these reasons, the Maryland Association of County Health Officers submits this Letter of Support As Amended for HB 1012. For more information, please contact Ruth Maiorana, MACHO Executive Director at [рмаiora1@jhu.edu](mailto:рмаiora1@jhu.edu) or 410-937-1433. *This communication reflects the position of MACHO.*

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**\_HB1012 - MDH - FIN - LOSAA (1).pdf**

Uploaded by: Meghan Lynch

Position: FAV



## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Meena Seshamani, M.D., Ph.D., Secretary

March 24, 2026

The Honorable Pamela Beidle  
Chair, Senate Finance Committee  
3 East Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: House Bill 1012 —Public Health - Local Suicide Fatality Review Teams -  
Authorization—Letter of Support As Amended**

Dear Chair Beidle and Committee Members,

The Maryland Department of Health (the Department) respectfully submits this letter of support as amended for House Bill (HB) 1012 - Public Health - Local Suicide Fatality Review Teams - Authorization. Effective October 1, 2026, HB 1012 would authorize a county or municipality to establish a local suicide fatality review team and require the local team to coordinate with the State Suicide Fatality Review Committee. The bill would also protect the deceased and their families or loved ones' privacy by exempting certain information from the Maryland Open Meetings Act or Maryland Public Information Act.

The Department supports the amendments to HB 1012 that ensure initial and ongoing coordination with the State Suicide Fatality Review Committee, protect against duplication of effort between the State and local jurisdictions, and maintain the authority of local child fatality review teams.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Meghan Lynch, Director of Governmental Affairs at [meghan.lynch@maryland.gov](mailto:meghan.lynch@maryland.gov).

Sincerely,

Meena Seshamani, MD, PhD  
Secretary of Health

# **HB1012 Written Testomony- MHAFC.pdf**

Uploaded by: Travis Walter

Position: FAV

**Written Testimony in Support of House Bill 1012**

**Public Health – Local Suicide Fatality Review Teams – Authorization**

**Position: FAVORABLE**

On behalf of the Mental Health Association of Frederick County (MHA), I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of House Bill 1012, authorizing counties and municipalities to establish Local Suicide Fatality Review Teams.

MHA's mission is building a strong foundation of emotional wellness by preparing resilient children, securing vulnerable families, facing crises together, and supporting the whole community. Suicide prevention is central to this work.

MHA provides services across the crisis continuum in Frederick County, ensuring there is someone to call, someone to respond, and somewhere to go. We operate the 24-hour Call Center that answers 988, deploy Mobile Crisis Services to respond in the community, and provide in-person support through our Walk-in Behavioral Health Center. Through this work, we see firsthand the complexity of suicide risk and the importance of coordinated, data-informed prevention efforts.

Each loss to suicide represents not only an individual tragedy, but also an opportunity to better understand how systems and services can respond more effectively. House Bill 1012 would authorize counties to establish multidisciplinary, community-based suicide fatality review teams to examine trends, identify service gaps, and address systemic barriers unique to their communities.

The bill appropriately requires coordination with the State Suicide Fatality Review Committee, ensuring alignment with statewide prevention efforts while allowing flexibility to address local needs. Maryland has successfully used fatality review models in other public health areas, and extending this framework to suicide prevention is a logical and evidence-informed next step.

The confidentiality protections and exemptions from the Open Meetings Act and Public Information Act are essential. Effective fatality review depends on candid, cross-system discussion of sensitive information. These safeguards allow teams to focus on learning and prevention rather than blame.

Authorizing local suicide fatality review teams will strengthen Maryland's suicide prevention infrastructure.

For these reasons, MHA respectfully urges a favorable vote on House Bill 1012.

Respectfully submitted,

Travis Walter

Director, Crisis Services

Mental Health Association of Frederick County

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