



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

March 19, 2026

House Bill 49
Public Health - Abortion (Heartbeat Bill)
House Health 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 49 requires that an abortion be performed by a physician, rather than a qualified provider; repealing certain provisions of law related to State interference with an abortion, regulations related to abortion, and liability or criminal punishment for qualified providers who perform an abortion; prohibiting a physician from knowingly performing, inducing, or attempting to perform or induce an abortion under certain circumstances and subject to certain exceptions.

This bill seeks to address critical issues such as testing, informed consent, and recordkeeping requirements, aligning with common-sense abortion regulations that prioritize transparency and accountability in medical care. House Bill 49 also seeks to secure additional protections for unborn children, particularly those whose hearts have begun to beat—a key indicator of life. Scientific evidence demonstrates that the presence of a detectable heartbeat at 6-8 weeks of gestation correlates with a live birth rate of approximately 98% in normal pregnancies without intervention.¹ This strong correlation underscores the significance of a fetal heartbeat as a vital sign of human life. Protecting unborn children with beating hearts affirms the inherent value and dignity of every human life.

Moreover, this legislation recognizes the profound connection between the health of the mother and the child. By advancing informed consent requirements and promoting life-affirming alternatives, this bill ensures that women receive comprehensive, compassionate care and are fully aware of the implications of their choices. It also aims to foster a culture of life where the well-being of both mother and child is respected and protected.

¹ <https://lozierinstitute.org/fact-sheet-fetal-survival-and-risk-of-pregnancy-loss/>

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report on **HB 49**.

Thank you for your consideration.