



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 25, 2026

House Bill 965
Office of Health Care Quality Stakeholder Advisory Council - Establishment
House Health Committee

Position: Favorable with Amendment

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 965 establishes the Office of Health Care Quality Stakeholder Advisory Council to provide feedback to the Office of Health Care Quality regarding maintaining oversight of health care facilities and to notify the Secretary of Health if the Office is negligent in providing oversight of health care facilities; requiring the Advisory Council, beginning January 1, 2027, to hold a virtual public meeting once every 6 months; and requiring a summary of each public meeting to be published on the Council's website within 30 days of the meeting.

The Advisory Council is charged with providing stakeholder feedback to the Office regarding oversight of health care facilities, while the Advisory Committee is responsible for reviewing data reports, compiling stakeholder input, and developing recommendations to improve nursing home and hospital care quality. To fulfill these responsibilities effectively, the Council and Committee must reflect the full diversity of health care providers serving Maryland residents.

Maryland has a substantial and longstanding presence of faith-based, nonprofit hospitals, particularly within the Catholic and Seventh-day Adventist traditions. These institutions include major systems such as Ascension Saint Agnes, Holy Cross Health (Trinity Health), Mercy Medical Center, and the extensive Adventist HealthCare network.¹ Collectively, faith-based hospitals represent a significant portion of Maryland's hospital infrastructure and serve communities across urban, suburban, and rural regions of the State.

Faith-based hospitals play a critical role in delivering holistic, patient-centered care that addresses not only physical health needs but also emotional and spiritual well-being. They are

¹ <https://mhaonline.org/about-maryland-hospital-association/members/>

often trusted providers for underserved and vulnerable populations and offer essential services such as palliative care, long-term care, and community-based outreach. Their care models are rooted in missions of compassion, dignity, and service, which shape how care is delivered and how quality and patient outcomes are measured.

Because faith-based institutions are key stakeholders in Maryland's health care system, their exclusion from the Advisory Council would leave a significant gap in perspective and expertise. Including representation from faith-based hospitals or providers ensures that policy recommendations reflect the realities of all major health care systems operating in the State and promotes balanced, inclusive oversight that serves Marylanders equitably.

Proposed Amendment:

(C) The Advisory Council consists of the following members:

(VII) One member representing faith-based institutions or providers.

Including faith-based representation will strengthen the Council's work, enhance the quality of its recommendations, and ensure that Maryland's health care oversight reflects the full spectrum of providers serving patients across the State.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report on **HB 965**.

Thank you for your consideration.