



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

March 31, 2026

House Bill 645
Criminal Law - Fraud - Assisted Reproductive Treatment
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Position: Information

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 645 prohibits a person from intentionally or knowingly providing certain assisted reproductive treatment to another using the person's sperm or ovum without the other's written consent to assisted reproductive treatment using the person's sperm or ovum; and establishing a civil cause of action for a violation of the Act.

While assisted reproductive technology (ART) offers new options for addressing infertility, it also presents serious ethical concerns and risks that require meaningful oversight. Documented cases of fraud and malpractice—including the unauthorized use of reproductive specimens by physicians or unknown individuals—undermine patient trust and can result in lifelong harm to mothers, children, and families.

Additionally, embryos created through ART may be destroyed due to contractual disputes, clinic misconduct, or because they are not selected by intended parents. The lack of transparency, donor anonymity, and insufficient accountability mechanisms leaves ART practices vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.¹ ART enables the creation of human life outside the natural process of conception, raising profound ethical concerns. The widespread creation, manipulation, and destruction of embryos—often deemed “spare” and discarded or used for research—treats human life as disposable biological material rather than as unique and irreplaceable persons.² These practices fail to respect the inherent dignity of human life, which begins at conception and deserves legal and moral protection.

¹ <https://www.scrippsnews.com/science-and-tech/why-fertility-doctors-get-away-with-using-their-own-sperm>

² <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9743043/>

As infertility becomes more prevalent, many families turn to ART out of deep hope and vulnerability. Without appropriate safeguards, however, these technologies place human dignity at risk and leave women and children exposed to harm without adequate recourse. Sentencing and civil accountability should serve the goals of justice and reparation by recognizing the harm inflicted on mothers, children, and families when ART is misused. Civil authorities have a fundamental responsibility to protect human life, particularly when it is deliberately or unjustly endangered.

The Catholic Church seeks to promote a society that upholds human dignity while balancing justice with mercy. Punishment should not be limited to retribution, but should also support rehabilitation and restoration. True justice holds offenders accountable while encouraging transformation, supports victims without fostering vengeance, restores community trust, and addresses root causes of harm.³ For this reason, we oppose policies that rely solely on harsher penalties without addressing systemic failures. Instead, we support accountability measures that protect victims, deter misconduct, and promote restorative justice approaches that emphasize healing, responsibility, and respect for human dignity.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for this information to be considered on **HB 645**.

Thank you for your consideration.

³ <https://www.usccb.org/resources/responsibility-rehabilitation-and-restoration-catholic-perspective-crime-and-criminal#intro>