

HB1553

Estates and Trusts- Guardianship of the Person of a Disabled Person- Emergency and Temporary
Guardianship Petitions

Judiciary

March 11, 2026

Favorable

Catholic Charities of Baltimore supports House Bill Number 1553, which requires guardianship orders for the person of a disabled adult to provide for certain visitation in the person's best interest; authorizes an interested person to petition for guardianship when the adult's current guardian is medically or physically neglecting them; requires courts to hear such petitions within a specified timeframe; and authorizes an interested person to petition for the appointment of a temporary guardian for a disabled person.

For over a century, Catholic Charities has provided care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need. We accompany Marylanders as they age with dignity, support their pursuit of employment and career advancement, heal from trauma and addiction, achieve independence, prepare for educational success, and welcome immigrant neighbors into Maryland communities.

Catholic Charities supports individuals with disabilities through programs like Gallagher Services, which provides residential and meaningful day supports to adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and Hosanna House, a permanent housing facility for single women over 18 who have been chronically homeless and have documented disabilities. In these settings, we have witnessed the significant challenges people with disabilities face when guardianship processes are delayed or mismanaged.

Of the many cases we have encountered, one example is a 52-year-old woman in our Gallagher program who endured years of pain from fibroids because the necessary guardianship was not in place to authorize the surgical treatment she required. These delays severely compromised both her health and quality of life. By establishing emergency and temporary guardianship procedures in cases of medical or physical neglect, HB 1553 ensures that vulnerable adults are not left unprotected while legal processes unfold. Delays in these situations can lead to worsening health, unsafe living conditions, and preventable harm.

Additionally, many individuals with disabilities are restricted from spending time with their families or capturing important life moments because their guardianship arrangements prevent them from doing so. Family members and loved ones play an essential role in providing emotional support, advocacy, and accountability. When safe and appropriate, maintaining these relationships helps protect the individual's dignity and well-being.

Catholic Charities believes that every person is created with inherent dignity and deserves care that ensures both safety and respect for their human worth. When a guardianship arrangement no longer serves that purpose, the law should not leave a vulnerable person without a prompt remedy. Research has shown that insufficient court oversight in guardianship proceedings can create significant opportunities for neglect, exploitation, and abuse. HB 1553 is a measured step toward improving safety, oversight, and protection for vulnerable adults.

For these reasons, Catholic Charities of Baltimore urges the committee to issue a favorable report for HB1553.

Submitted By: Madelin Martinez, Assistant Director of Advocacy on behalf of Meti Negassa, Advocacy Fellow and Katie Kemp, Gallagher Services Administrator