



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

March 19, 2021

House Bill 1349

**Public Health - Maryland Prenatal and Infant Care Grant Program Fund
House Health and Government Operations Committee**

Position: Support

The Maryland Catholic Conference represents the public policy interests of the three Roman Catholic (arch)dioceses serving Maryland: the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Archdiocese of Washington, and the Diocese of Wilmington, which together encompass over one million Marylanders.

House Bill 1349 would expand the Maryland Prenatal and Infant Care Grant Program Fund to \$1.1 million in 2023, \$2.1 million in 2024, and \$3.1 million in 2025. It would also expand the eligible grant applicants to include not just counties but also federally qualified health centers, hospitals and other prenatal care providers.

In 2018, 30% of pregnant women in Maryland received inadequate prenatal care, and 7% of pregnant women received late (third trimester) or no prenatal care. The picture worsens for Black and Latina mothers who were twice as likely to receive late or no prenatal care.¹ In Prince George's County, just half of Latina mothers received adequate prenatal care in 2017.²

Lack of prenatal care is implicated in maternal and infant mortality, preterm birth, low birth weight, and worse health outcomes for mothers and infants, all of which disproportionately impact our low-income, minority and immigrant communities in the state. The barriers for women receiving prenatal care include lack of access, high cost especially for the uninsured, and the fact that thousands of undocumented mothers are ineligible for Medicaid.

Our Catholic healthcare systems, hospitals and clinics serve mothers who could not otherwise afford healthcare every day and this bill would help to ensure more women receive the care they need. The Conference works to support efforts that are life-affirming. Providing grants to qualified prenatal care providers will ensure the health and safety of mothers and babies who are at risk.

It is for these reasons that the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report for **HB1349**. Thank you for your consideration.

¹ Maryland Department of Health, [Vital Statistics Report](#), 2018

² Prince George's County Health Department, [Maternal and Infant Health Report](#), 2019