



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

March 1, 2024

House Bill 1171

**Nonprescription Drugs and Devices – Provision by Registered Nurses and Sale of
Contraceptives Through Automatic Devices
House Health and Government Operations Committee**

Position: Unfavorable

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 1171 repeals the prohibition on the sale of certain contraceptives by means of a vending machine or other automatic device; and authorizes registered nurses to provide, without a prescription, nonprescription drugs and devices in a local health department under certain circumstances.

The use of over-the-counter (OTC) contraception eliminates the need for clinician involvement in obtaining these medications. Typically, clinicians guide contraception uses by discussing potential health implications based on individual conditions. However, the broader effects of contraceptive use on women and society are not well-researched. In an average human menstrual cycle, women experience significant hormonal fluctuations, with about an 8-fold increase in 17β -estradiol (the most prevalent and potent form of estrogen in mammals) and an approximately 80-fold increase in progesterone.¹ Promoting OTC contraceptives through vending machines, as proposed by House Bill 1171, raises concerns. Such accessibility may encourage the suppression of natural sex hormone production, impacting various aspects of daily human activities, including stress, eating patterns, emotion regulation, learning, and attraction, with long-lasting cascading effects.

While the bill aims to provide access to OTC contraception without prescriptions, it is important to note its lack of a comprehensive approach to health decisions and the potential implications of contraceptive use on individuals. Rather than solely promoting contraceptive use, legislation

¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7882021/>

should prioritize enhancing knowledge and awareness of women's bodies while safeguarding their unique ecosystems.

For these reasons, the MCC asks for an unfavorable report on **HB 1171**.

Thank you for your consideration.