



MARYLAND  
CATHOLIC  
CONFERENCE

March 27, 2025

**Senate Bill 447**

**Hospitals - Emergency Pregnancy-Related Medical Conditions – Procedures  
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.

**Senate Bill 447** requires a hospital to conduct screening on a patient presenting at an emergency department of the hospital to determine whether the patient has an emergency pregnancy–related medical condition; establishing requirements and prohibitions related to the treatment and transfer of a patient who has an emergency pregnancy–related medical condition; requiring a hospital to allow the termination of a pregnancy in certain circumstances; prohibiting a hospital from taking adverse action against a provider for not transferring a patient who is not stabilized or against a hospital employee if the employee reports a violation of this Act; and generally relating to emergency pregnancy–related medical conditions and hospitals.

The federal Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA) ensures all patients, including pregnant women, receive emergency care regardless of their ability to pay. While it requires hospitals to provide stabilizing treatment, it also does not override federal conscience protections that allow religious hospitals to refuse procedures like abortion on moral grounds. As EMTALA already exists and is enforced as federal law, the State does not need to duplicate the law nor add unnecessary bureaucracy. A state-level EMTALA could impose additional legal requirements, increasing the risk of lawsuits and compliance burdens. Catholic hospitals already operate under complex regulations – state-level mandates could add new liabilities and administrative burdens.

A state-level EMTALA could expand EMTALA's scope or remove flexibility for Catholic hospitals to transfer patients in situations where procedures would violate their moral and ethical commitments. This bill would undermine the ability of Catholic hospitals in Maryland to uphold

the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services (ERDs), which are rooted in the dignity of all human life. ERDs for Catholic health care ensure that patients receive care that respects both medical necessity and Catholic moral teachings, a balance threatened by a state EMTALA.

As Catholics, we remain committed to advocating for policies that provide the best and most compassionate care for both mothers and their preborn children—especially in the most difficult medical situations.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for an unfavorable report on **SB 447**.

Thank you for your consideration.