



**March 28, 2023**

**Senate Bill 798**

**Declaration of Rights - Right to Reproductive Freedom**

**House Health and Government Operations Committee**

**Position: Unfavorable**

The Maryland Catholic Conference 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 798 would establish a fundamental right to reproductive freedom and would enshrine abortion, at any stage, into our State Constitution. We believe that every person is created in the image and likeness of God and all life should be protected and respected from conception to natural death.

There is no need for a Constitutional amendment; unfortunately, Maryland currently has one of the highest rates of abortion in the country and Maryland is already a destination in the abortion travel industry. Maryland already ranks near the very top of States that carry out abortions by percentage of the population, and Maryland taxpayers already pay millions in taxes that go to providing abortions for others. This bill will help only increase these trends.

As a society we are broken when a response to any pregnancy is fear rather than joy. We must do better as a society to walk with mothers in need and help break down economic, social, racial, employment and emotional barriers that lead mothers into thinking abortion is the only option. As Pope Francis reminds us "All life has inestimable value even the weakest and most vulnerable, the sick, the old, the unborn and the poor....they deserve the utmost reverence and respect."

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for an **unfavorable** report on **SB 798**.

Thank you for your consideration.