

MCC concerned about same-sex bills

Two bills that the Maryland Catholic Conference believes could undermine respect for human sexuality are advancing in the final days of the Maryland General Assembly.

Senate Bill 566 would prohibit discrimination based on “gender identity,” codifying into law a distinction between a person’s “gender identity” and his or her “assigned sex at birth.” The bill does not include protections for religious institutions, which would be required to comply with the employment and other provisions regarding transgendered persons, according to the MCC.

Senate Bill 785 would exempt same-sex domestic partners from the inheritance tax and MCC leaders believe it would expand the list of limited benefits available to domestic partners with the intent of putting the state on the path to equating same-sex relationships with marriage.

“We have serious concerns with both pieces of legislation,” said Mary Ellen Russell, MCC executive director. “They may seem well-intentioned on the surface, but we’re very concerned about the trend this type of legislation is taking in undermining basic moral principles regarding marriage and the understanding of the human person and human sexuality.”

Ms. Russell noted that if SB 785 is approved, it would be the third “limited benefits” bill passed in more than a year and the first to restrict such benefits to same-sex couples. She questioned why the bill excludes heterosexual partners.

“That feature of the bill really reveals the problematic nature of trying to extend the

special status of marriage to other relationships where there isn't an obvious rationale for it," Ms. Russell said.

The Senate Budget and Taxation Committee approved SB 566 on a 9-6 vote last week, with the full Senate expected to take up debate on the measure as The Catholic Review went to press April 7.

The Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee is expected to vote on SB 785 this week.

The last day of the legislative session is April 13.