
BILL NO: House Bill 1162
TITLE: Health – Abortions – Reporting Requirements
COMMITTEE: Health and Government Operations
HEARING DATE: March 13, 2020
POSITION: **OPPOSE**

House Bill 1162 would require abortion providers to report wide-ranging information on patients who receive abortion care. The Women’s Law Center opposes House Bill 1162 because it would have a chilling effect on communication between a patient and her doctor.

House Bill 1162 requires that any doctor who performs an abortion must report to the Maryland Department of Health. The doctor must include wide ranging information about the patient, and includes other information such as the gestational age of the fetus and the reasons provided by the patient for the abortion. While the bill does not require the specific identification of any patient, if a woman knows that her abortion will be reported, it will have a chilling effect on women seeking reproductive care. Whether and when to have children, and especially the consideration of abortion, is a deeply personal decision, and any public reporting of such a decision invades the privacy of the patient.

The notion that this required reporting will have no negative effect on either the women seeking abortion services or those providing the services is a complete denial of the reality we have seen in this country. From the many thousands of attacks on abortion providers and facilities and the endless harassment of those seeking services, the issue of abortion services raises the risk level of every doctor performing those services and every woman who needs the services. Privacy is of the utmost importance for safety reasons. There has been a distinct and clear increase on the part of anti-choice organizations, especially through use of the internet, to induce fear and to intimidate both providers of abortion and those seeking this medical care. The reporting requirements appear to have no nexus with the health or safety of patients. Rather, it a patent attempt to chill access to services, to stigmatize abortion care, harass providers and patients, and advance a political agenda.

As recognized in *Eisenstadt v. Baird*, “[I]f the right of privacy means anything, it is the right of the individual, married or single, to be free from unwanted governmental intrusion into matters so fundamentally affecting a person as the decision whether to bear or beget a child.” 405 U.S. 438, 453 (1972). House Bill 1162 is just such “unwanted governmental intrusion.”

For these reasons, the Women’s Law Center urges an unfavorable report on House Bill 1162.

The Women’s Law Center of Maryland is a private, non-profit, membership organization that serves as a leading voice for justice and fairness for women. It advocates for the rights of women through legal assistance to individuals and strategic initiatives to achieve systemic change. The Women’s Law Center operates two hotlines, the Protection Order Advocacy and Representation Projects in Baltimore City, Baltimore County and Carroll County, and the statewide Collateral Legal Assistance for Survivors and Multi-Ethnic Domestic Violence Projects.