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HB1162 Health – Abortions – Reporting Requirements

Every year, the MD Legislature passes bills requiring studies, counts, and reporting for a vast array of subject matter. We measure just about everything – the number of students in our public schools, students receiving free and reduced meals, the number of students passing standardized test, road miles, forests, the employed, the unemployed, vaccines, chemicals applied to our crops, crops harvested, and even the number of chickens raised on the eastern shore. HB1162 imposes abortion reporting requirements on the State while maintaining privacy of the individual.

A good delegate appeared in the Environment & Transportation Committee for a bill hearing earlier this year and commented “What gets measured matters.” I ask:

Doesn't it matter to know if a child is aborted due to rape or incest so we can identify areas that might need attention?

Doesn't it matter to know if a pregnancy was terminated due to financial hardship or lack of resources, or family support so we can direct support where it is needed?

Doesn't it matter to know if there is a lack of educational resources so our citizens can receive the proper education?

Doesn't it matter to know if there is fetal deformity so we might investigate the underlying cause(s)?

Doesn't it matter to know where and how to direct resources when a jurisdiction desires to curb a high teenage pregnancy rate, such as was done in Washington County?

Doesn't it matter to know so the State can more effectively protect women's health by utilizing more accurate statistical analyses in crafting abortion laws and regulations, and to assist women at high risk for unintended pregnancy?

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) requests this information from the States on a voluntary basis. Forty-seven States have mandatory reporting laws and voluntarily comply with this request. Only three states do not report – California, Maryland, and New Hampshire. Maryland has not reported abortion data since 2006.

The Baltimore Sun has reported that Maryland's maternal mortality rate is one of the highest in the Nation. And Rosann Wisman of Planned Parenthood of Metropolitan Washington is on record stating that “. . . mandatory reporting would improve the completeness of the data on abortion services throughout the State.” The data is available -- it just needs to be collected.

In addition, information is available on Medicaid-funded abortions in Maryland. Medicaid will reimburse an abortion provider under 5 circumstances – pregnancy would result in the death of the mother, pregnancy is a threat to the physical health of the mother, pregnancy is a threat to the mental health of the mother, child is affected by a genetic defect or deformity or abnormality, or the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest.

This bill, as written, does not infringe on the right of the individual's privacy, nor does it threaten the identity or safety of the doctor or facility performing the procedure. In fact, this bill does not take sides on the abortion debate at all, but rather allows policymakers and planners to make better-informed decisions to improve the health and well-being of women and evaluate efforts to reduce or prevent unintended pregnancies. I thank you and ask for a favorable report.