
BILL NO: House Bill 1179
TITLE: Public Health – Unborn Human Beings and Infants (Humane Disposition of Human Remains Act)
COMMITTEE: Health and Government Operations
HEARING DATE: March 13, 2020
POSITION: **OPPOSE**

House Bill 1179 would require a woman to determine what to do with fetal remains after a termination or miscarriage of a fetus, in order to either cremate the remains of the fetus or exercise internment. This bill is designed to shame women for exercising their right to choose in the most disturbing way possible. HB 1179 is perhaps the most callous and most repugnant of all the bills that have been introduced over at least the last decade that try to impose on a woman's constitutional rights and otherwise interfere with her medical status.

A woman's right to choose to have an abortion is a constitutional right that has been guaranteed to her for nearly 50 years. The bill would require the woman to determine what is done with the fetus and authorize its last disposition. The woman may not leave the hospital or health care facility until authorizing what should happen to the fetus. The requirement would be for any abortion or miscarriage. This draconian bill is a manipulative and traumatizing way to try to make a woman feel guilty for exercising her right to choose, or just for having a medical issue with her pregnancy that caused it to be non-viable.

This bill also has the ability to charge a woman for the costs of a funeral for a fetus that she aborted constitutionally. Adding these financial barriers after an abortion is dangerous and extremely discriminatory against women in lower socio-economic statuses. If a woman cannot exercise her right to choose because of an offensive supplemental cost that may come after, a woman's constitutional right has been violated. HB 1179 adds a financial cost and emotional shame to a woman for exercising her constitutional right to an abortion, which has been guaranteed for almost 50 years.

For these reasons, the Women's Law Center urges an unfavorable report on House Bill 1179.

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.